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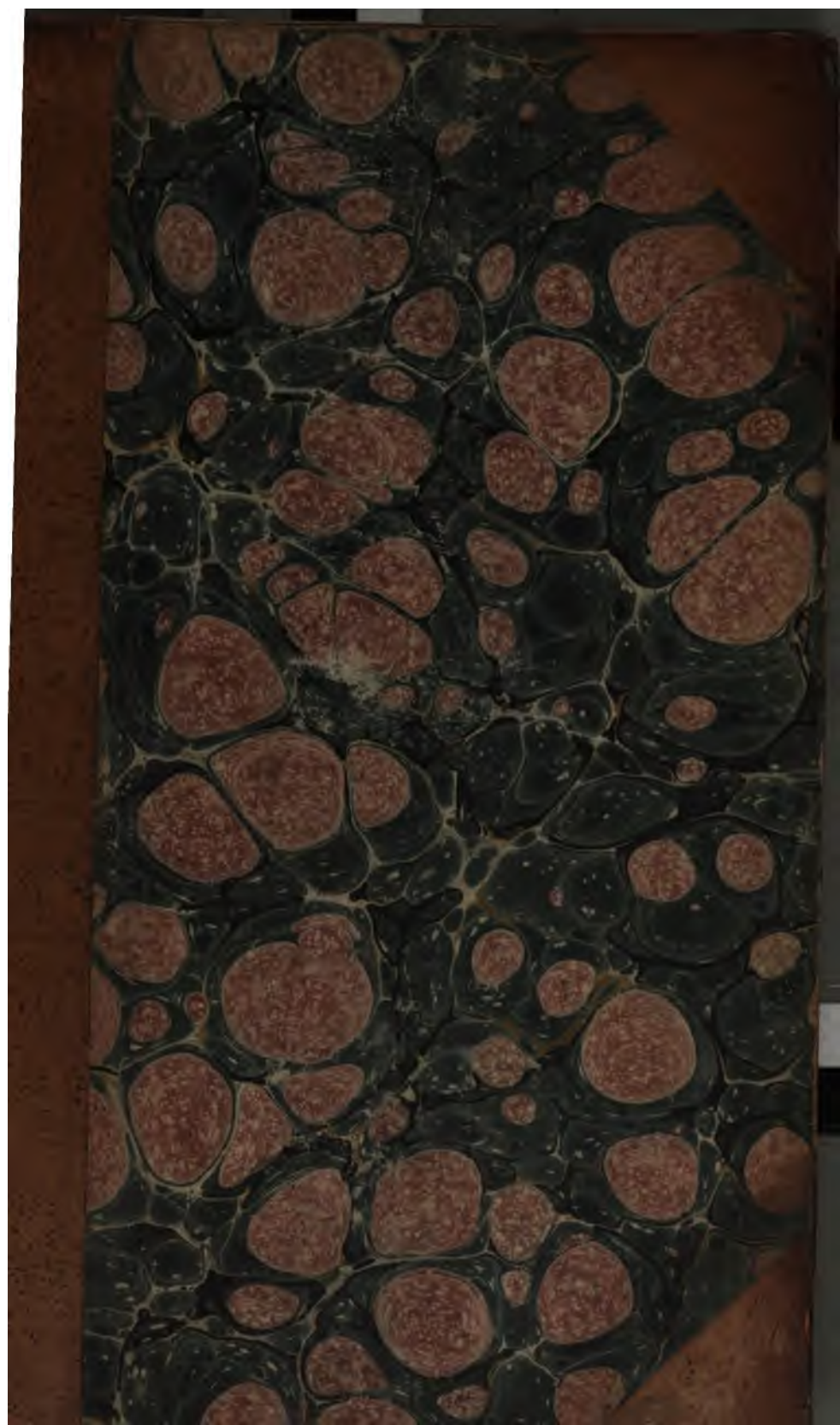
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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

HISTORY

OF THE

PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL,

AND ITS

EARLY PROPAGATION;

FROM THE DEDICATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE,

TO THE END OF THE

FIRST CHRISTIAN CENTURY.

BY THE

REV. J. COLLINSON, M.A.

RECTOR OF GATESHEAD, DURHAM.

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TO

SIR JOHN RICHARDSON, KNT.

**LATE ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE COURT
OF COMMON PLEAS.**

MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

THE present publication, designed, in its humble degree, to assist in promoting the Propagation of the Gospel among the heathens, will obtain a more favourable reception, especially among the Laity, by having your name prefixed. No one will more readily perceive the faults in the execution of the work than yourself; and no one, I am persuaded, will more easily excuse them, if it shall be found, on the whole, serviceable to the great cause in view.

Those who know you, will feel that there is a propriety in this address, because you have contributed to spread Christian principles, by a good example, both in the discharge of your public duties in the high office of Judge, and also in the consistent practice of private virtues, during a life which religion has carried with patience and cheerfulness through the severe trial of long indisposition.

Accept this sincere tribute of respect, esteem, and regard, from an old friend,

THE AUTHOR.

THE RECTORY, GATESHEAD,
November 7, 1830.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE reader will not expect from this work more than a summary of leading events relating to the preparation for the Gospel and its early propagation, with occasional observations. A regular and detailed account of them has been given by the learned Dean Prideaux, and may be found included in the general histories of the Christian Church, in the standard works of Fleury and Mosheim. Narratives of particular missions in comparatively modern times, and especially in our own age, there are in abundance ; but many of these, written by persons much interested, and of ardent enthusiastic tempers, are to be received with caution and allowance. Yet even those who are not very safe guides as to the means to be used, or unexceptionable witnesses of the results pro-

duced, are often, from their animation, successful advocates of the principle of converting the heathen. And it must on all hands be allowed no easy matter to proceed in this undertaking, of all others at once the most important and delicate, with such a mixture of zeal, tempered with prudence, as may satisfy both the sanguine and the discreet, and be worthy of the cause.

The main object of the present publication is an endeavour to bring the light of experience to bear upon this subject, by enquiring into the chief historical statements which relate to the reception and diffusion of Christianity. There remain upon record, for the guidance of individuals and of Churches, examples of self-devotion, of heroic fortitude, of consummate wisdom, in pious men, who, through all ages, have been inspired and strengthened to give themselves up to preach Christ crucified with simplicity of purpose and virtuous integrity of life. Upon the same topic are furnished for our instruction, instances of the vices of bad, ambitious, and tyrannical men, of the mistakes of injudicious and ignorant men; in a word, of human errors and transgressions. Systematic schemes have from time to time been devised and carried on for the same purpose, with more or less honesty

of principle, with more or less wisdom and perseverance in the execution. By selecting the principal cases, by weighing facts and characters with a careful comparison according to the evidence before us, we may, in this our day, learn what to do and what to avoid ; contemplating, as the result of our examination and reflections, with humble reliance on the Divine aid, a plan or method for attaining the best end by the best means, for the most extensive propagation of the Gospel in the most unexceptionable manner. By such historical enquiry we may hope to attain clearer views of the scheme of Providence with regard to the diffusion of revealed religion.

Before we attempt thus to mark the spirit of the early Christian missions, and to trace the causes which, humanly speaking, have led to their failure or success, it may be well to premise some brief remarks on the duty which obliges Christians to exert themselves in endeavouring to extend their religion. This shall be the subject of a second chapter. At present it may be necessary to advert to certain notions or opinions sometimes advocated to this effect, that religion is altogether a private affair, so entirely between the Supreme Being and a man's own conscience, that no one has any business with his

neighbour's religion. This sentiment goes much farther than what is called complete toleration, and the removal of all civil disabilities on account of differences of religious persuasion. It amounts or leads to practical Atheism, to being without God in the world. Those who care not what is their neighbour's religion, will, as the next step, not care whether he has any religion at all. They will think their own faith a matter of indifference ; and at length will consider religious professions bad things, and the Christian religion a source of evil, as it has been called, much upon the same ground that property might be called a cause of robbery and murder.

Positive persecution on account of religion is now justly and generally condemned : but the question of toleration, as far as regards admission to offices of trust and power, like other matters of state policy, depends greatly upon times and circumstances, which must have an influence in regulating its rigour or laxity, and the extent to which it is to be adopted and enforced. On the other hand, we contend, as for an unchangeable principle, that religion is not to be considered of secondary importance in the constitution of a state, inferior to mental and bodily qualifications, and even to the accidents of

birth and fortune, which, together or apart, have been all over the world deemed indispensable requisites for places of authority. The use and benefit of all these must depend upon the moral character of the possessor ; and in forming that, no motive is so powerful as religious impressions and habits. Consequently, the better and purer a religion is, the more productive of moral virtues will it be among those who profess it.

Generally, all historical accounts agree, that no people have been formed into a public society, as a community or nation, without religion, without the sanction of oaths, by which the power of the Deity is solemnly invoked with regard to the engagements mutually entered into by the parties concerned, as the rewarder of those who keep their fidelity, and the avenger of the faithless. Facts farther prove, that those who profess to treat all religions alike, are often actuated not so much by a spirit of calm philosophy, as by hostility to a certain established system of religion, and its ministers, after the examples of Jeroboam King of Israel and the Emperor Julian ; and thus become flagrant instances of that intolerance which they openly condemn. The infidel and the bigot are both found to use persecution, the one for lowering,

the other for extending religion ; which ought not to be charged with the faults, moral or political, of its friends or its enemies.

But if in state affairs religion were entirely banished, or reduced to a very low estimation, its influence would still, by an instinct of nature, prevail in the hearts of men. Human beings cannot, if they would, get rid of their belief that there is an invisible world, with which they have, in a mysterious manner, a connection of the utmost importance. The wretch who has within him undivulged crimes, *will* tremble at the thought of a judgment to come ; and the righteous, however destitute, will feel a hope and confidence of supernatural aid, which the world cannot give or take away. Religion cannot be shaken out of the mind by any change of circumstances or opinions, not by compulsion, by false philosophy, by vice, by passion, by business, by distress, by enjoyment. The thought continually and naturally recurs to men, in all situations, that there is a Judge, omniscient and almighty, who sees the secrets of all hearts, severe to the obstinate sinner, and merciful to the penitent, who will one day make an exact retribution of recompence and punishment to the good and to the wicked justly, according to their deserts. In the structure and

preservation of the constitution of things around us, we are constantly struck with instances of Providential contrivance, so far beyond our comprehension in their multiplicity, their continuance, their extent, and even their minuteness, that we spontaneously attribute the whole work to an intellect infinite in wisdom, goodness, and power. There is something within us responsive to these impressions: the notion of perfection is so congenial to us, that we gladly become familiar with accounts of the innocence of our own species in times past, and with the expectation of attaining perfectibility hereafter. We lament, involuntarily, our personal defects and degeneracy; and wish, and resolve, and expect, to amend and improve. Most men have a secret hope of some unbroken felicity, which is to better their condition. The people of all countries are charmed with those beautiful stories, the creations of fancy, in which the evils and disappointments of real life are smoothed away; and virtue is represented victorious over fortune. In the records of authentic history, we dwell upon the characters of eminent men, the great and good of our country and of human kind, and their noble actions: we dignify them with the titles of heroes, saints, and patriots, as the

heathens deified them : their memory is cherished by posterity ; and we seem to receive honour by paying it to their merits, and to share in their renown, as a species of common property. We wish to consider their excellent qualities as near perfection as may be, and strive to give them an immortality. It is well known that the same feelings are exemplified continually towards dear objects of affection in the humble walks of private life.

Above all, we cling to the belief of the perfect attributes of the Deity ; and so far from reducing them to a level with the actual state of things, it is part of the universal creed, that there will be a more equal adjustment between right and wrong than what now exists, a state in which the ways of God will be fully vindicated, according to that complete holiness which belongs to him.

If then it be true, or reasonably probable, that man is a being formed for eternity, his chief business during this life of trial and probation, must be to prepare himself for a future state, and the Divine Judgment after death. Before this consideration all others sink into comparative nothingness.

It has been, indeed, said by some persons,

that the resurrection of man to eternal life is not proved ; and that we can only believe what we see and know. This assertion might pass, but that the things we see do not account for themselves, and our knowledge amounts to ignorance : something we must believe, without positive proof, in regard to the origin of our present existence here, a subject as much involved in obscurity as our future destiny.

Some men have no care for eternity ; it is not in all their thoughts : or if the thought arises in their minds, they trust in undefined hope to the mercy of God. This is an argument, not against, but in favour of religion ; the first glimmering spark of which requires to be nourished in the human breast. Are persons of this heedless temper safe ? We should not say so, reasoning by analogy from what happens in this world. Men who run headlong in life, with thoughtless carelessness, continually fall in their foolish security into irremediable ruin, as a consequence of their imprudence, which those who are wise foresee, and avoid by using their understanding circumspectly, and with due reflection.

Discreet men make provision against future contingencies, and with more care in proportion to the greatness of the hazard. To be careless

of what is to come, is not courage or serenity of temper, but an absence of reason, infatuation, madness. The greatest of all risks is that of eternity, against which there is no protection but in religion. Instead, therefore, of stifling the natural feelings of religion, implanted in us, doubtless for beneficial purposes, we should endeavour by all means to improve and strengthen them, by reason, knowledge, and experience; as the natural feelings of affection and justice are brought into full effect by good systems of law and morality.

And now comes, for our consideration, the point of a choice of religions. Generally, in all nations, men acquiesce in the religion of their country, of their parents; as they conform implicitly and yield obedience to the civil institutions under which they happen to be born. Some Asiatic people are said to have admitted no change in their modes of faith and of government for time immemorial: but with us Europeans it is far otherwise. We hold the names of none in greater honour than those who have wrought such changes, who have devoted their lives, their reputation, and all they held dear on earth for the sake of producing alterations in Church and State, which in conscience they deemed neces-

sary improvements. Such sacrifices are the tests of sincerity and resolution on the part of converts to new doctrines, and of the extreme value which, in their opinion, attaches to them. So paramount is the importance of religious truth, because eternity involves greater consequences than all secular interests united, that men who seriously reflect cannot allow to themselves any equivocation on this subject, either by affecting to believe what they do not believe in their hearts, or by silently acquiescing in a worship of the Deity which their conscience disapproves. They feel that a mere outward shew of religion, from which their minds are alien, is a mockery of God, and that to dissemble their creed, may be, under some circumstances, an offence of almost equal magnitude. And thus opinions relating to the welfare of the soul, in immortality, preponderate over all others; though they may swerve under occasional and urgent temptations.

Men, however habituated to certain principles and forms of religion, may be convinced of their unsoundness and inefficacy, and become converts to what they think a purer faith: for instance, they may renounce Paganism, Mahometanism, and Judaism, for Christianity, and leave one

Christian society for another more accordant with the Gospel. These conversions, unless they are sincere, are no conversions at all ; and consequently, they cannot be brought about by compulsion or for convenience sake. They are operations of the mind and heart. If they take place hastily, or upon light grounds, the character of the convert suffers, though not in point of honesty, yet for good sense and consistency, and temper.

It is to be expected, that every man should, upon occasion, be able to give some reasonable account of his religious opinions. The reasonableness of believing Christianity to be a Divine revelation, has been often proved in various ways, by evidences and arguments so conclusive, that to Christians there is no choice but their own faith or natural religion. If the Bible be not the work of inspiration, there is no written word of God : and we are left to our own resources to find out the Divine will, and our way to eternal life, instinctively as we can.

Although it is not the object of this work to endeavour to prove the truth of the Christian religion, but to examine into the best manner of performing one of the duties which it prescribes ; yet we may be allowed briefly to advert to some

general arguments for its credibility. If it be admitted as no unreasonable proposition, that the Almighty may have vouchsafed a revelation of his will to mankind for their benefit, there is great probability the communication would be made after the manner of the Holy Scriptures; that is to say, attended with prophecies and miracles, and conveyed from time to time, through the medium of good men, so convinced of the inspiration influencing them, as to obey it in preference to all human authority and all worldly considerations. It might farther be expected, with reason, that the Divine attributes disclosed in such a revelation, would correspond with our notions of perfection, mixed with a degree of mystery; for the faculties of man cannot be supposed capable of thoroughly comprehending the nature of the Deity. Other characters of credibility belong also to the Christian revelation: it is a system reconciling the justice with the mercy of God, by declaring that a satisfaction has been offered for the sins of men,—the thing aimed at in all the heathen sacrifices; and, what the heathen mythology did not, it unites religion inseparably with moral virtue. Under this admirable code, while sin is totally condemned, encouragement is held out very con-

sistently and persuasively to the penitent sinner. The union of the Godhead with manhood in the person of Jesus Christ, for the redemption and atonement of human sins, is indeed an amazing doctrine, and one which puts to silence our reason. Yet, for aught we can tell, there may be an exact suitableness in the provision thus made to the necessity of the case. The doctrine relates too, it must be remembered, to the Divine essence and modes of operation, subjects beyond all others confessedly incomprehensible by us. We cannot even understand the agency of Providence in the things of this world, which not to believe is atheism: we find that God is not careless and unmindful of his creatures; but, on the contrary, in the system of nature, continually preserved and renovated, has adapted means to ends, though in an inexplicable manner, with a foresight and nicety which ensure success—all things tending to good in the work of infinite benevolence. Believing the Divine Being to be the Author and Governor of the universe around us, we still find unaccountable difficulties in this scheme, particularly from the constant occurrence of evil; it is no wonder, therefore, that our faculties should be baffled in contemplating the things which relate to eternity.

All systems of religion and morality are only credible: they do not admit of mathematical proof and certainty. We are now considering some apparent probabilities in favour of the Christian revelation, which may induce reflecting men to weigh well the specific evidences of its truth. A very remarkable instance of this kind is, that the Gospel has brought life and immortality to light : and it might be expected that a teacher who really came from God should speak not doubtingly, but with authority and assurance, as Christ did, of a future state, and should give such notices of the circumstances attending it, as, though not full and clear, should yet be plain enough to direct mankind in the way of salvation. No such authoritative communication appears in the heathen religions. The Gospel alone, teaching that men are excluded unavoidably by sin from eternal happiness, proposes a way for them to attain it by faith. It states that God has done for them what they could not do for themselves ; a doctrine which we feel in our consciences to be necessary for our consolation, and therefore credible. We cannot, indeed, understand how these bodies, after returning dust to dust, should be raised again in their identity for judgment after death : but this is not impossible with him

who made them. We cannot understand that doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is called orthodox (because it has been embraced through all ages by the great body of Christians); but we find that the Deity mingles in the constitution of this world, and the course of events, by a parental superintendence and provident management; and therefore it is probable, that God may, by an intimate connexion of himself with our nature, have prepared for the future welfare of mankind in immortality. That we are made acquainted only with some circumstances relating to the eternal world, while obscurity hangs over the rest, is far from extraordinary, when it is considered that in this life our knowledge is exceedingly limited. Particularly, with all our thought, we are ignorant what the morrow may bring forth; and can we expect, then, to see into distant futurity? Enough is revealed for our welfare; the certainty, namely, of a life to come; and so much of the will of God as may enable us, by a sincere endeavour to please him, in this probationary state, to obtain, in the resurrection, the eternal reward purchased for us at an inestimable price.

The thought of retribution after death can be treated as a light thing only by light minds, full

of folly, which, according to the awful import of the term in Scripture, means a mixture of unsound understanding, unfeeling disposition, and idle, wanton, dissoluteness of character. The same thought is terrible to the wicked, and to those who have obstinately and perversely taken up a profession of unbelief. And ought it not to be so? Are not such profane mockeries and such fears consistent in the parties concerned in this case? But to the virtuous and pious, and sober-minded, to good men, the thought of meeting God in a better state, though awful, is a source of constant hope, of chastised joy, the greatest of all comforts. What can elevate and refine the mind so much as this sublime contemplation? In prosperity, pride and vanity will be abated, and patience will be improved in adversity, by the consideration, that these are trials dispensed in this transitory state, and that for our conduct under them we shall be accountable to an all-seeing and righteous Judge. This is that heavenly medicine which can relieve and heal the wounded spirit, afflicted and broken by miseries unavoidable, and otherwise without remedy, by pain, disease, by bitter and unmerited disappointments, and injuries, by desti-

tute sorrow, by the loss of friends in death. To such, all the stores of the whole world cannot bring consolation like those few words, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." To those who are weary and worn out with troubles and vexations, and who cannot help being grieved and annoyed at the superior prosperity of the wicked, this belief gives resignation and contentment with their lot. Then, in the case of other persons who are in a happy and flourishing condition, it is hard for them to quit, perhaps in the prime of life, the advantages they possess, to part for ever from worthy objects of affection, and the pleasant intercourse of friends, from lands and houses, from power, reputation, and schemes of benevolent usefulness, and go they know not whither. Human nature shrinks from death and annihilation ; and the approach of the king of terrors, even in declining old age, is in itself melancholy to all, and most melancholy when the good are taken away. Well, the Christian Revelation brings help which nature wants, casts light upon this gloomy scene, and enlivens it with hope. And is not a dispensation credible which is so suited to the actual circumstances of the human race, which checks those who are too

much elated, makes enjoyment more grateful, and takes the sting from all sorrow, except that which arises from an evil conscience ?

And even in this last and worst malady, the Gospel holds out its own peculiar remedy by faith and repentance. It teaches us that a satisfaction has been made for sinners, as we all are, by the redemption of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Otherwise men might well dread to meet a Judge of perfect righteousness. Repentance is not innocence, so much the reverse, that it includes a confession of guilt. We feel that we have been unprofitable servants, that at the tribunal of eternal justice we shall have to answer for talents misused or unused, for time wasted, for neglects of duty and actual transgressions ; we stand self-condemned, and totally incapable of offering any satisfaction or reparation to God ; for, besides that he has a right to our whole service, we cannot recal past time and circumstances, and opportunities ; we cannot make sin to be not sin. We want a Redeemer to take off the burden of our iniquities, and make us capable of Divine mercy ; and this want renders the doctrine credible. A man has led a long life of profligacy, violence, and irreligion, and

has committed murders and robberies; and at the close his conscience is awakened. What can repentance do for him? it cannot make amends for the evils he has actually perpetrated, and for his bad example. Strict moral virtue bids him despair: but the Christian religion meets his necessity in offering to him a Saviour, who has made a complete atonement for sinners who believe and repent. This is a reasonable and probable propitiation, and turns men from superstitious practices and will-worship, on which many are led vainly to depend, as means of appeasing the Deity. A belief in this Divine Redeemer and Mediator, is also a specific and powerful antidote against the fear of malevolent spirits, which seems, by natural instinct, to harass the ignorant.

Of all the marks of authenticity belonging to the Christian Revelation, perhaps the most palpable is the beautiful excellence of its moral precepts, and their tendency to promote human happiness by the practice of virtue. If honesty, industry, temperance, fidelity, disinterestedness, and charity, are good qualities, commendable and advantageous among men, then is the Gospel which teaches them under a Divine sanction so

far worthy to be true. The precepts "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and "love your enemies," turn justice into kindness and beneficence. Rulers and masters are instructed to use lawful authority for the good of the governed, and servants and subjects learn the measure of dutiful obedience. No system of morals was ever so consistent, so pure, so impartial, so complete, as that which is inculcated in the New Testament: and it has had a beneficial effect in the world, particularly by improving the condition of the poor and destitute, of the female sex, and of children. Infidels have considered it the severest taunt applicable to Christians, "you do not live up to your religious profession;" a tacit acknowledgment of the excellence of the profession itself. The morality of infidels has insensibly been purified by the influence of the Gospel standard of virtue, and by the impression of the incomparable example of Jesus Christ.

It is obvious that it is not merely a matter of private conscience whether or not an individual takes this code of morality for his rule of life: all his connexions, friends, and neighbours, and the circle of society in which he is cast, are interested in his professing and acting upon the

principles of Christianity. But it may be said, no objection is made, none can be made, to the moral precepts of the Gospel; the more widely they are extended, and the more faithfully they are followed, the better for mankind: but the difficulty is in believing the mysterious and supernatural parts of the Christian Revelation, which cannot be understood or proved. This difficulty belongs to the subject-matter, and attends all religions, and is less in the Christian than in any other. Instead of rejecting the faith of the Gospel because it is not entirely level to human capacities, it would be more reasonable to receive the religious part as true, because it comes recommended by a morality clearly of the highest use and excellence. The Revelation cannot be divided into two systems, one of piety, the other of virtue, of which individuals are at liberty to choose only the latter. Moreover, the morality of the Gospel, taken apart from its religion (if the separation could be made, which is impossible) would possess neither authority nor influence; no authority, for there would exist no power to enforce the observation of virtuous precepts, which would sleep like laws without an executive government; no influence, for a Divine sanction and the hope of future

recompence would be wanting to encourage goodness. Men would select some parts of this moral code, according to their inclination and fancy, and mould it to meet their particular views of expedience and self interest. As it is, God knows, Christian morals are not too much followed and obeyed by Christians; and they would soon be lost sight of entirely if the obligation arising from their being the will of God was withdrawn. Add to this, though virtue is, by a happy law of nature, its own reward; yet each individual is apt to fashion out a virtue for himself: and it is to be feared, that Christians, if in this life only they had hope in Christ, would be of all men most miserable.

These things being considered, one cannot but wonder that any persons, professing benevolence and philosophy, should systematically set about to deprive mankind of the consolations of our holy religion. Philanthropy, coupled with infidelity, is at the best a very cold and inadequate substitute for the Gospel; and as experience proves, soon flies off in vanity, or settles down, as by a gravitating force, into selfishness. To say that religion is bigotry and enthusiasm is to call names: it is liable to excess and abuse, like the affection of parents to their children, and all

other feelings and principles inherent to man ; but the errors of Christians form no fair argument against the credibility of the Gospel.

Those who are brought to think that there is generally no improbability, either from the facts or reason of the case, that the Gospel is a Divine Revelation, may consider it their duty to proceed to weigh, with the attention the subject requires, the particular evidences of its truth. They are separately many and various, external and internal, metaphysical and natural, arising from the character of the witnesses, and from our own wants ; and taken collectively, with a regard to their coherence and extraordinary consistency with each other, as a whole, they form a mass and body of proof far stronger than those who have not examined for themselves can be aware.

In reality men are not generally indifferent to the religious faith of those about them : all seek, directly or indirectly, even imperceptibly and unconsciously, to spread their own opinions ; and naturally join with cordiality and confidence those who agree with them on important subjects. Free-thinker coalesces with free-thinker in extending scepticism. In societies it must be allowed to be a great mutual security and bond

of strength, that the whole community should come under the same known obligations of duty, and should be engaged to each other unanimously and confessedly by the ties of the same religious principles. Each man then, judging from his own impressions, knows what his neighbour contracts to do, and upon what grounds, and can easily detect any failure in practice, and any departure from the common and acknowledged motives of action. Vices are committed in privacy, and covered by hypocrisy ; men do not agree in opinion what is virtue in particular cases, nor are there always opportunities even to the best-disposed for practising it, and the quality of some virtues depends upon their secrecy. These and other reasons render it inexpedient to fix upon a general profession of morality as a test and criterion of character ; and recourse has been had to an obligation more clear, universal, and unvarying, an appeal namely to the righteous Providence of God. If it be an error to believe in this Divine Providence, we may well adapt ¹ Cicero's beautiful and forcible language, on the subject of the immortality of the soul, to this kindred tenet, and say

¹ De Senect. 23.

it is an error so agreeable, that we will not by any means have it extorted from us. But it is no error: we may as well question our own existence as this fundamental religious truth. Men have universally treated with equal abhorrence, as equally irreligious, those who deny the moral attributes, and those who deny the Being of God. Farther a natural anxiety arises in the breasts of serious persons to worship God aright, and to know and to do his will; and consequently to spread what they think true religion among those who are near and dear to them. No compromise can be admitted upon a point of such supreme importance; and hence the violence of religious contests, for in this cause men feel it becoming and necessary to be in earnest. Christians breed up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and select from Christians of their own way of thinking, their dependents and friends; more particularly as the religion of the Gospel is eminently social, and therein are many commands and exhortations to united worship, with promised blessings annexed. A Christian government also, in parental solicitude for the welfare of the community, will make provision for the religious instruction of the people, as well from motives of piety (for the

best, the wisest, and greatest men have ever acknowledged a humble and a grateful dependence upon Divine aid) as from policy, and with a view to bring religious principles and ordinances into familiar and constant use, since in manners habit is altogether mistress. In certain instances, indeed, ecclesiastical establishments have unhappily been incompatible with civil government; and great convulsions have followed in society. No doubt the State will find a farther inducement to protect religion, if the Church does not claim to stand upon a foreign, or even a separate independent jurisdiction, but makes an integral part of the body politic at home, under one and the same authority, while the Priesthood melt easily into the community among their fellow-citizens with undivided interests.

These premises, if truly stated, warrant the conclusion, that men are naturally and necessarily religious; that our reason and feelings lead us to a choice of what we deliberately think the best religion, (this being a matter, above all others, most important to our temporal and eternal happiness) and so on to teach and impart it, as a blessing, to those with whom we live in familiar intercourse.

The duty of going to foreign countries, for the

purpose of converting the heathen to the faith of Christ is different again, not arising from these general principles, but resting, as we shall presently see, upon a command specially delivered in that Gospel, which we believe to be a Divine Revelation.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE DUTY OF PROPAGATING THE GOSPEL.

NATURALLY men are neither inclined nor obliged to use exertions for extending their religion among strangers. The desire of gaining knowledge is a much stronger passion than the wish of imparting it : the pupils feel the impulse of a lively curiosity and the charms of novelty ; but the teacher requires to be stimulated by some other motive than the mere love of communicating knowledge. Generally, in all times, those who wish to learn travel, not those who are able to teach. The ancient philosophers, after improving their minds by the stores of acquired knowledge, and by reflection, remained at home instructing those who flocked in numbers to imbibe science, wisdom, and virtue, from their discourses. Modern schools and universities have been established for the express purpose of con-

gregating disciples from a distance to one spot, in which select instructors in all the various branches of learning are assembled, by the inducements of reputation and of liberal rewards. There also are collected, at an immense expense, repositories of books and instruments, and models in different arts and sciences; and there noble buildings are erected by the munificence of generous benefactors, for the reception of students. That nothing may be wanting to train and stimulate the young mind to learning, a system of discipline prevails in those venerable abodes, by which the rich and impetuous are restrained, the poor and the modest are encouraged, and all are incited to exercise and improve their powers of understanding, by free trials and impartial rewards of merit and talent. Every possible inducement of emulation, profit and honour, is solicitously held out to excite the industry of ingenuous scholars in the pursuit of knowledge, truth, and virtue. And the plan has succeeded, and must succeed. Those who have had the glory of contributing to it in any eminent degree are "men of renown," are considered benefactors of the human race, and had in honour from generation to generation. The places thus dedicated to intellectual improvement, are in a man-

ner hallowed : and Rome, twice mistress of the world, with all her magnificence, is scarcely so much an object of interest, as that famous, though ruined city, once the pride of Greece, the mother and nurse of all kinds of learning, now, alas ! tenanted by an enslaved and ignorant population, the remnant only and monument of what Athens was.

Those who sincerely and earnestly wished to spread knowledge and the cultivation of the human mind, have constantly endeavoured, as the best means of attaining their end, to induce, by all the motives they could suggest, the lovers of learning to come from distant parts, to certain institutions in which preparations were made for instruction. These endeavours have been deservedly honoured and respected : they were thought enough for the purpose ; and no one deemed it necessary or right that the patrons and teachers of knowledge should go about journeying from one country to another in search of disciples. In our own age, which is frequently described (whether justly or not is another question) as particularly enlightened and philanthropical, no friendly philosopher proposes gratuitously to go to foreign lands among barbarous people,

for the purpose of teaching them the use of the compass or the steam engine, the arts of writing and printing, or in order to offer to them some good code of legislation, and precepts of moral virtue. Those celebrated travellers, who, in a spirit of hardy enterprise, have penetrated into seas and territories hitherto unknown, in the heart of America, Asia, and even now at last, it seems, of Africa, have gone, not to give information to the natives, but in the hope of bringing back to their countrymen at home, some useful and honourable result of their discoveries. All these efforts, though proceeding from a most meritorious principle of giving and acquiring knowledge, are the reverse of the duty of the Christian Missionary, who is to go forth to instruct the ignorant heathen foreigner, in that foreigner's country and language.

The subject of religion affords no exception to the principle and practice of education which we have been contemplating, as generally prevalent throughout the world. In Pagan nations, of ancient and modern times, all religions apparently have been, and are, considered of nearly equal value, or as essentially the same. Among the Greeks and Romans, notwithstanding the

elegance of their system of mythology, the spirit of polytheism was so tolerant ¹, or rather its principles were so loose and vague, that the superstitions of other countries were objects of curiosity rather than of concern. Differences of religious faith and rites caused no dispute or contention in nations communicating with each other, and scarcely any surprise, unless in very extraordinary instances. Where all modes of religious worship were considered equally true and useful, there could be no reason or occasion to attempt to make converts. A conversion of individuals there might be from atheism to devotion, chiefly exhibited in attendance on the public sacrifices to the gods; from a vicious daring profligacy of life, to virtue and decorum: but there was no deliberate choice of creeds, no preference of one above another, from rational conviction. The ancient heathens, with whose habits we are best acquainted, had no systematic divine revelation, contained in books, for their guide; but only some obscure disjointed prophecies and oracles: the intimations of the Divine will were, as they believed, chiefly conveyed to them by certain na-

¹ See the *Euterpe* of Herodotus, in which book he treats of the Egyptians, and *Cæsar de Bell. Gall.* 6. 17. *Gibbon*, ch. 2.

tural phenomena, the flight of birds and entrails of victims. Private persons became odious and suspected, if they opposed or neglected the religious system of their country; but still the people were no more concerned to impart it in the world among strangers, than to spread their municipal laws, or the fashion of their garments. The popular religion consisted rather in ceremonies than in opinions; but notwithstanding its accompanying absurdities and extravagances, is not to be too much disparaged. In the midst of the darkness of Pagan ignorance and errors, sparks of the Divinity occasionally shine out. God gave witness of himself in the moral, as in the natural world, either by impressing on the human soul an innate consciousness of its Author, or by notices of Divine revelation, which gradually spread among mankind from the Jewish Scriptures and Patriarchal traditions. The Giver of all goodness inspired from time to time teachers of righteousness, however imperfect, such as Socrates and Confucius, who shewed the beauty and expediency of virtue, and its consistency with nature and reason. The mythology of Greece and Rome really embodied the two great tenets, which seem implanted by nature in the hearts and consciences of men, the belief,

namely, of one Supreme Being, who providentially rules the world, and of some future state of retribution, in which good men shall be rewarded, and bad men punished. Both these tenets, or feelings, or instincts, animate Homer's picture of life in "the tale of Troy divine:" and the first of them is expressly traced in the popular writings and language of heathens, by two early fathers of the Christian Church, by Justin Martyr, in a short tract, "on the Monarchy of God," and by Tertullian, in a strain of sublime expostulation in his treatise "on the Testimony of the Soul." Erasmus, who brought back good taste to literature, and good sense to religion, breaks forth into this glowing eulogy on Cicero, "When I read his Treatise on Old Age, on Friendship, on Duties, I cannot forbear, now and then, from kissing the book, and venerating that holy and divinely-inspired breast," (*coelesti afflatum numine*)¹. And Cowper, with his own happy propriety of language, writes thus to one who had stricter views in religion, if possible, than himself: "Homer, by ascribing all events to a Divine interposition, inculcates constantly the belief of a Providence; insists much on the

¹ *Convivium Religiosum*.

duty of charity towards the poor and the stranger ; on the respect that is due to superiors, and to our seniors in particular ; and on the expediency and necessity of prayer and piety towards the gods ; a piety, mistaken indeed in its object, but exemplary for the punctuality of its performance ¹."

Still, whatever salt of truth might be sprinkled through the corrupt errors of the religious code of heathenism, whatever of virtue might be found among the prevalent vices of its professors, they had no thought of making proselytes systematically to any particular mode of worship. On the contrary, their most solemn rites consisted of mysteries and orgies, which it was considered equally impious and disgraceful to reveal to the uninitiated. Even the philosophers taught one kind of knowledge publicly to the people at large, and another in secret to their more favoured pupils : unless, indeed, this distinction really conferred an advantage only on those who had a superior capacity and love for learning ; a preference and selection which the most sanguine friends of universal education are obliged always to adopt, more or less, in practice.

¹ Private Correspondence, Vol. II. p. 260.

Moreover, God himself expressly separated his chosen people from the rest of mankind. The Jewish religion, being the only true one, was, unlike Polytheism, intolerant : unlike Christianity, it was also exclusive. No provision was made by the Divine Lawgiver for the conversion of strangers¹ ; yet proselytes (foreigners, as the word implies, who dwelt among the children of Israel, and applied for participation in their religious privileges) were admitted, according to the Mosaic institution, in some cases with difficulty, almost with reluctance², or were treated as slaves. Many persons were positively excluded from the family³ of Isaac : and as all males were enjoined to appear before the Lord in one place three times each year⁴, this command alone would prevent the religion from spreading extensively in other countries. Even for the three centuries before Jesus Christ, after the conquests of Alexander, when Jerusalem had been often captured, and the Jews were in consequence dispersed into foreign lands, they seem to have relaxed their national peculiarities only by necessity, assimilating themselves as little as pos-

¹ Exod. xii. 43. 48.

² Deut. xxiii. 2 Chron. ii. 17.

³ Exod. xvii. 14.

⁴ Exod. xxiii. 17. Deut. xvi. 16.

sible to the people among whom they dwelt. Some proselytes were then gradually admitted, who leaving the worship and gross sins of idolaters, obliged themselves to a strict observance of the ceremonies of the Mosaic law ; but other converts simply adored the one true living God, and acknowledged an obedience to the rules of moral virtue contained in the Scriptures. The prophecies and miracles of the Jews, when in captivity ¹ among the Persians, no doubt tended to diffuse the light of true religion over the heathen ; as did afterwards the Septuagint Translation (as it is called) of the Bible at Alexandria. But upon these memorable occasions the Jews were actuated by motives very different from a mere desire of propagating their faith ; and, upon the whole, priding themselves upon their exclusive privileges, as sole depositaries of the law of God, they felt it neither their inclination nor their duty to seek for converts. ² Basnage judiciously observes, that the reproof of our Lord, “ ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte,” applies to the Pharisees not so much

¹ “ Many of the people of the land became Jews.”—*Esther* viii. 17.

² *Hist. des Juifs*, Lib. VI. ch. 6. sec. 15.

on account of their endeavours to convert heathens to Judaism, as for their zeal in bringing Jews over to their own sect, for secular and bad purposes, as the context shews.

And here, perhaps, an objector may say, "Why should we Christians busy ourselves to do what never was done before, by undertaking missions for spreading our religion? If some leading truths, relating to Divine worship and morals, are contained, as you say, even in the systems of Pagan mythology; and if the Israelites, under the government of God himself, were not directed to seek for converts, surely it is presumptuous in us to interfere with what appears to be the order and course of things intended by him, who made and preserves the world. If he had willed that one universal religion should prevail among all the nations of the globe, he would have implanted a belief and knowledge of this truth in the breasts of all human beings, as he has given to parents an instinctive fondness for their offspring. Nay, perhaps he has given by nature as much sense of religion as is necessary for the happiness of men here and hereafter. The Christian religion is an intellectual and moral refinement and improvement; but though very beneficial and desirable in itself, there is no more

absolute need for its being imparted generally to all the world, than there is for dispersing among all nations the discoveries of science, and the various fruits of European civilization. Suffer the world to manage itself. The good God will not punish for ignorance those to whom he has not given knowledge. The Judge of all the earth cannot but exercise righteousness in mercy. Do not pretend to occupy his seat ; but instead of wandering to amend, as you suppose, the condition of others, take care of your own, and strive to render yourself acceptable to him according to the lights you have received.

“ By so doing you will much ensure the peace of mankind, which has been broken by no cause more than by religious differences, arising from intolerance. The Almighty suffers different kinds of worship of himself, but man is not so patient, he will force his own creed upon his neighbour. And by what means ? Sometimes by shameful frauds and impostures ; sometimes by cruel tyranny, gross violence and wrong, even when the religious principle has been pure, and unmingled with base worldly motives of avarice and ambition. But, good God ! under the name of propagating Christianity, what abuses have been practised, at which untaught human nature

shudders and revolts. Then at the best you try argument, reasoning, and persuasion. You show the Scriptures. But the wild Indian laughs at your writings, and says the word of God are the heavens and the earth. Or, the Bramin produces his volume, in his opinion, equally sacred, equally inspired with your own : but more modest, more discreet than you, he does not furnish out companies of teachers to sail, for thousands of miles, across the seas, in the vain hope of inducing all men to think alike."

To these and similar objections, we answer, in the first place, that the argument against any principle of action, derived from its abuse, is no argument at all. Let whatever is amiss in the conduct of Christian missions be done away and reformed : this is our earnest wish and study. For the rest, we consider it our bounden duty to endeavour to fulfil our Lord's last command ; in the execution of which, we are to meet difficulties and dangers, and the conflicting opinions of other men, with prudence and circumspection, not, however, allowing these or any obstacles to deter us from putting in practice, to the best of our power, the great principle of evangelizing all nations. . This precept is one among the peculiarities of Christ's religion, and is a distinguishing

mark of its Divine origin, and of its being intended, as it is suited, for all mankind.

Those four virtues, which heathen morality calls cardinal, are restraints upon human passions: and the Divine laws of the Decalogue, for the most part, enjoin us to abstain from certain actions. But the Gospel inculcates new charities, teaching us to do good to all men, even to strangers and enemies, as opportunity offers. Farther, in this single case of propagating the Christian faith, a part of this peculiar and unique duty is to make the occasion for performing it.

If it be said, you then consign over to everlasting perdition all those who have not heard of Christ, or, at least, all who, after being instructed that he is the only Saviour of mankind, do not receive him as such—we answer, not so. We make no judicial sentence, God forbid we should: it is not our business even to form an opinion on this awful subject. But it is our business, it is our duty, to obey the declared will of God. To decide who are to be eternally happy, and who are to be eternally miserable, is the property of the Almighty, who has not thought fit to disclose to men or angels even the time of that last judgment, much less the details of it. We attempt not to penetrate the Divine decrees and counsels;

nor are we so presumptuous as to judge other men. But we consider, we shall ourselves be exposed to judgment and to punishment, if we neglect the precepts of our Lord and Master. One of these relates to the extension of his religion. The principle, therefore, of this duty is the same as of all other duties : and because many extraordinary and peculiar difficulties attend the performance of it, this is a reason, not for leaving our service undone, but rather for redoubling our diligence in preparing to accomplish it. Nor are we answerable for the result : the virtuous heathen may be rewarded, while the negligent Christian is punished ; our zealous endeavours to convert infidels may be unsuccessful, and yet approved by him who seeth in secret.

Moreover the Christian religion is so calculated to promote human happiness, by abating cruelty, injustice, and oppression, and by assisting and comforting the weak and distressed among mankind, that on the mere ground of temporal utility, we should think ourselves justified in recommending it for universal reception ; though we should not presume to go forth as teachers to all nations, unless we had a positive order for so doing. The experience of facts proves the beneficial effects of Christianity, wherever it has

become established ; which counterbalance, beyond all proportion, the evils of religious intolerance. These evils are in fact not engendered by the pure principles of Christianity, but by the abuse of them through human passions and errors.

But how will you set about teaching the Gospel to all men ? This is the question we wish to be able to resolve, and, for that purpose, to enquire with patience and candour into the practice of antiquity, and of the best times in this matter. Let it be granted, that it is the duty of Christians to attempt this great work ; and we readily acknowledge that very great difficulties belong to it, in ascertaining by whom the Gospel is to be preached, and to whom, and in what manner.

Difficulties existed from the first. Our Lord acted, if we may so venture to express ourselves, with care and prudence : he *chose* his twelve Apostles, and gave them particular directions when he sent them to preach—"Go not to the Gentiles nor to the Samaritans, but rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ¹." Other seventy were also appointed to the same work out of the

¹ Matt. x.

great body of Disciples¹. Jesus Christ himself did not many mighty works among his own countrymen on account of their unbelief². All this shews selection and discrimination: and there appears only a solitary instance of a single person, who, being not regularly sent forth, was permitted to act with Christ's authority³. After our Lord's resurrection, the Apostles were commanded by him to wait at Jerusalem for the Holy Ghost; and this Divine Guide and Monitor directed all their subsequent labours⁴; and sometimes restrained their motions⁵. The persons who were to preach, and the places to which they were to be sent, were carefully and distinctly appointed by competent authority in the Church, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. With regard to the manner of conducting themselves in their office, some disputes arose⁶: and St. Paul's Epistles are full of admonitions to young Ministers.

From these Scriptural premises we conclude, that as it is a dangerous negligence of Christian principle for any nation or Church wholly to

¹ Luke x.

² Matt. xiii. 58.

³ Mark ix. 28.

⁴ Acts i. 4. vi. 3. xiii. 2.

⁵ Acts xvi. 7.

⁶ Acts xv. 39. Gal. ii. 11.

disregard our Saviour's command of preaching to the heathen ; so, on the other hand, it is a dangerous presumption in practice, for any men, or body of men, to take upon themselves this momentous office, without due authority and a rightful commission, and thus to go forth to preach the Gospel, where they please and as they please. If missions are undertaken by unfaithful ministers from secular and unworthy motives, this is, perhaps, a worse fault than total inactivity. But even those who act from the best intentions, and who are lawfully sent, should consider that the work of a missionary requires a ready judgment and sound discretion, or it cannot be performed properly and effectually. The most difficult matter, it must be confessed, is to kindle a zeal for the eternal welfare of mankind : but probably many more persons would contribute with alacrity their exertions to missions, if they were once convinced that the undertaking is upon a solid foundation, and under temperate and wise management, free from the ebullitions of heady enthusiasm.

Let it be our endeavour to trace out this foundation and this management, according to the memorials left us by history ; and especially to

inquire how Christianity was propagated during the time of the Apostles themselves and their companions.

For the more full understanding of the subject, it will be well, in the first place, to take a compendious survey of what may be called the History of the Preparation for the Gospel. We believe that Christianity is an integral part of one great consistent scheme of Providence for the moral improvement of mankind, and the promotion of their happiness in this and in a better state; that it is a consummation of the Mosaic institutions, the design of which was gradually unfolded, and may be distinctly traced, particularly after the reign of Solomon. The truth of the supernatural agency, and of the theological argument drawn from it, may be questioned: but it is beyond dispute, that certain facts took place in the history of the Jews, and of neighbouring nations, which formed an introduction to the Gospel, and opened the way for its reception in the world. We believe that Christ came in "the fulness of time¹," at "the appointed time:" but why the Redeemer and Saviour did not appear in earlier ages, and

¹ Gal. iv. 2. 4.

why his doctrine has not extended throughout all the world, are matters we can no more account for than we can tell for what reason great discoveries in the laws of nature, and in mechanical science, have been reserved for comparatively modern times, and the capacity of using them, after they have been discovered, has been restricted to a small portion of mankind.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE HISTORY OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL.

THE history of the Jewish nation, full of extraordinary circumstances, presents none more remarkable than their continuance and present condition, particularly if considered in connection with the prophecies of their destiny delivered in the Scriptures. It is not according to the common probable course of events that this family, springing from the progeny of one man, multiplied exceedingly in a foreign country, as a separate distinct race ; and that, after being reduced to a state of the most galling servitude for many generations, they escaped out of captivity against the will of the people of the country, and went forth from the midst of them in great numbers, as an organized body, to take possession of another distant land, and to conquer its warlike in-

habitants. When the Israelites were weak they succeeded, when strong they failed ; all in accordance with known predictions. The promise unexpectedly given to Abraham had, at the time, no reasonable appearance of being realized, yet it has remained valid through intervening ages, and every year adds still to its accomplishment. After experiencing every vicissitude of fortune, war, exile, captivity, and internal dissensions, terminating in the extinction of ten tribes, after being tributaries in their own country, and, worst of all, after having that country wrested from them, the remnant of the sons of Jacob still continue a distinct people. They have tried all forms of government ; having enjoyed the peculiar privilege of a theocracy, they became weary of the Divine superintendence, and of the judges and leaders whom God, from time to time, raised up to rule and guide his people well and wisely in peace and war, according to the Divine law. They longed for a king, who should rule like other kings, upon principles of temporal policy ; and who, though he might exercise a tyrannical authority, would yet, by successful war and conquest, and regal pomp and display, gratify the pride of ambition ; and relaxing the bands of religious ordinances, would allow to his subjects

a free scope for the corrupt passions of the human heart, and connive at any vices or excesses on their part, which did not interfere with his own sovereign power. By demanding a king, they, in fact, "rejected God, that he should not rule over them." They desired some novel laws, emanating from human, and, therefore, less pure, authority, in lieu of those righteous statutes, which were wisdom and strength to them, and should have been equally their glory and delight. Moses had repeatedly forewarned them, that their temporal prosperity depended upon a dutiful obedience to the inspired ordinances, and that calamity would be the certain consequence of disobedience : and events, happening contrary to probability, verified this judicial sentence.

In ordinary cases we find, that among almost all nations a crown has been usually conferred upon some fortunate and able warrior ; or has been seized or obtained by some person of high birth, of superior sagacity and eminent merit, who knew how to avail himself of opportunities dexterously and vigorously, and to make his cause good by the power of relatives and adherents, mixing real services to the state with the less noble arts of intrigue. But in this singular instance, it is the people who wish for a king, with-

out having fixed their choice upon a particular individual. The transaction is moreover very remarkable, as being in exact conformity with the words of Moses ¹, and thus it assumes the character of the fulfilment of a prediction. These directions, delivered so many centuries before the event which brought them into use, contain also restraints upon the king therein contemplated: and we shall have occasion to observe what calamities befel both king and people after, and we may here say, in consequence of, the neglect of these prohibitions. The coincidence of the facts with the previous declarations, forms an evidence so strong for the divine inspiration of Moses, that we may almost call it indisputable; for as the prophet could not, by human foresight and sagacity, have anticipated the event, so neither, in this case, could the prophecy have led to its own accomplishment. The appointment of kingly government is not in itself a moral offence or political error; but under the circumstances of the Israelites, it was in them a transgression, a fault, particularly as it implied a mistrust of their Almighty King, and a disinclination to his rule. They were

¹ Deut. xvii. 14.

accordingly cautioned and warned against the evils which should result from an indulgence in their irreligious wilfulness; evils which human prudence could not contemplate or avert, for they ensued in contradiction to the maxims of worldly policy, and the probabilities of things. It might reasonably, and according to experience, have been inferred that the authority of a sovereign would consolidate the power of the nation, render them more united at home, and more formidable to their enemies abroad, and these happy results did actually follow the royal appointment, although, from causes easily explained and anticipated in Holy Writ, the prosperity was of short duration. Indeed, the want of some supreme executive power is plainly and often set forth in the book of Judges, which describes the state of the people as both weak and tumultuous, when "there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." In like manner, the restraints imposed upon the king of Israel appear, in the abstract, to be arbitrary and uncalled for; they are so unusual that nothing like them is to be found in the history of other nations, and they seem calculated rather to diminish, than to increase, the public power of the community. They are in

substance very different from those domestic limitations which the laws and usages of most countries have placed as salutary checks upon the sovereign, to prevent despotism ; and are directed against national aggrandizement, by forbidding the use of those means, which politicians in all ages have employed for raising small states into great empires. Yet experience proved that these prospective restrictions were wise, expedient, and necessary, in order to keep the Israelites from a dependence on their own temporal resources, and to fix their minds upon the divine law, which was the only solid foundation of their strength. Events too soon verified the prediction of Moses, in that fine hymn¹,—“Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked :” the nation, which, in its weakness, was upright and righteous, was made wanton and refractory by prosperity : “then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.” That the full-blown exuberance of prosperity is a state peculiarly liable to accidents, and followed by exhaustion and decay ; and that men, as individuals and in communities, are too prone to barter their virtue, and, with it, their happi-

¹ Deut. xxxii.

ness, to gratify ambition, vanity, and the love of power ; these are lessons taught by heathen, as well as Jewish, histories : but the extraordinary matter in this case is, that the sufferings were foretold as judicial inflictions which would follow certain acts of disobedience, and that they operated to the proposed effect, by producing a partial reformation in the offenders, and thus preventing the dissolution of the Jewish commonwealth. As the Divine dispensation was gradually developed, the nature and conditions of the promised blessings were more clearly understood ; consisting not in widely-extended dominion, but in the more safe and more happy lot of moderate possessions, which might be forfeited by a failure in piety and virtue. Experience proves that this is the law of nature as well as revelation. It is not the fall of the Israelites, but their repeated recoveries, and continual preservation, which is miraculous. A retrospect of their history farther shews, that through this people, and by means of them, the Almighty designed to teach righteousness to the whole world ; and the supernatural protection extended to them has continually awakened the attention of mankind to their law and institutions. These are evidently calculated, in the main points of

religion and virtue, for universal acceptance and use. The doctrine of one Supreme Being, who delights in holiness, recommends itself to our nature; the commandments of the decalogue contain the substance of human duty to God and man, and may surely be preferred (as Cicero¹ preferred the laws of the twelve tables) to the volumes of all the philosophers, ancient and modern, in right of authority, and extensive usefulness. These precepts, though delivered in a barbarous age, are so far from being barbarous, that among the most civilized nations they have been considered a standard of morality, only surpassed by the perfect excellence of the Gospel, for which they formed a preparation. The same observation applies to the general tone of humanity and virtue pervading the Mosaic writings, to the strict maxims of impartial justice therein contained, and the kind and gentle treatment enjoined towards dependent and destitute persons, the stranger, the poor, the widows and orphans, captives and slaves, and even with regard to the brute creation. In the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, we find the golden rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These

¹ De Orat. I. 44.

pure sentiments of love to God and man insensibly spread beyond the pale of the Jewish community, particularly after their captivity, and the general advancement of literature and civilization : as the ritual law declined, they made progress, and served more effectually than ceremonies to prepare men's minds for a more perfect covenant than that of Moses, which should propose, not temporal advantages, but a redemption from sin, and the hope of eternal life. It is also remarkable that the precepts of the Pentateuch are adapted to a superior and conquering people, rather than to a nation tributary and subservient to others, which latter character has attached usually, with the exception of a short interval, to the Jews.

It is their written law, the holy Scriptures, and the principle of religion derived from it, which has given to this extraordinary nation their peculiar vitality. The Heraclidæ, the most distinguished of European families, melted after a time into the common stock : but the sons of Jacob have repeatedly survived their conquerors and masters. While successive empires and dynasties have gone to pieces and been obliterated, they remain impassive in the midst of the work of destruction, and renovation con-

tinually going on around them. The preservation of this small remnant of a small people, through all vicissitudes of time, can only be attributed, we think, to the overruling Providence of God, who having originally chosen them out to be depositaries of the Divine oracles, has caused them to be witnesses of the truth in all ages and countries, even against their will and without their knowledge; while their uncommon and mysterious destination has made an impression which prepared mankind to receive the doctrines of the Christian revelation, and at the same time proved its authenticity.

Now, since the Messiah came at a time when, according to the Jews themselves, he was expected, in fulfilment of the Scriptural prophecies, and since, by their confession, their hopes of the Deliverer, and of promised temporal blessings, have been frustrated; their subsequent condition has remained a monument of Divine power, and an index to direct the attention of mankind to the spiritual meaning of the word of God, and to the attainment of happiness in eternity. Scattered among all nations, in a tributary, captive, depressed state, having occasionally been exposed to cruel ignominy and extreme persecutions, without governors, without country, or alliances

or connexions, scarcely possessing civil rights, or what may be called a resting place for a home; the Jews are still Jews. They have adopted the languages of those among whom they dwell, but they retain their own customs and habits of life exclusively; they preserve their family marks, and are easily identified now, in their dispersion and destitution, as the same peculiar race, who were once lords of the land of Canaan. The continued storm of adversity has indeed crushed in this people the noble daring spirit of enterprise, and they have, from necessity, betaken themselves to a subordinate path of ambition by accumulating wealth in traffic and merchandise. Unsupported by political power, or by offices of rank and trust, they follow gain, according to the character and example of their progenitor Jacob, who was of gentle and unwarlike habits; and like him, when driven from one country, they take refuge in another, and, upon the whole, thrive in their feebleness. They have also cultivated some branches of learning; and ever retain a sense of superiority, as children of Abraham, over the rest of mankind. This has degenerated into unsocial habits, and obstinate bigotry, and exposed them in return to the contempt and hatred of the world, not at all appeased by their

occasionally having had recourse to excessive suppleness, and over-acted subserviency of manner: but still the Jews have never lost caste, they have respected themselves, and by talents, industry, and inflexible perseverance, have made and kept their way in spite of obstacles apparently insurmountable. Wars and revolutions of empires bend them for a time, but they recover with inherent elasticity, after the tempest has passed. The Scriptures intimate that this remarkable people are preserved, in the inscrutable purposes of Providence, to execute some distinguished part before the dissolution of this globe, particularly in the great work of extending Christianity among all its inhabitants.

It is our present object to point to some events in their history, after the reign of Solomon, which served as harbingers of the Gospel, giving promise and expectation of that day-spring, before it broke forth. The Israelites were promised, by their inspired lawgiver, the possession of the small but fertile territory of Canaan; but after having been miraculously guided, and settled in the country, the accomplishment of the Divine pledge was delayed by their own iniquities. They could not acknowledge, or perhaps understand, that their repeated transgres-

sions occasioned the struggle with the idolatrous inhabitants to be prolonged, with various success, for three hundred and fifty years. "All the elders" of Israel then make application for a king to the excellent prophet and judge, Samuel; whose behaviour is that of a man surprised and displeased at the request, but at the same time very firm and very honest. After many remonstrances, dictated alike by piety and prudence, but without effect, Samuel is allowed to yield to the importunity of a refractory race; and fixing by Divine interposition upon Saul, anoints him to be king, a young man, unknown, of no reputation, who, far from seeking this honour, was astonished at its being conferred upon him, a Benjamite, of the least considerable family in the smallest tribe. The young monarch, for some time, attended to the admonitions of Samuel, but his moody wilful temper prevailed; and when he presumptuously disobeyed the Divine command, in sparing Amalek, his family was rejected from the throne; and in their stead, the prophet was directed to anoint for the royal office, the youngest of the seven sons of Jesse, a shepherd-boy, living in total obscurity. Saul, with superior personal strength, and valour corresponding, possessed the qualities of a barbarous

chieftain ; but the character of David is of a much higher stamp and better nature. His enterprising courage, and great talents, joined with disinterested generosity of spirit, and tenderness of feeling, made him an object of attachment as well as of respect, and give him the advantage in a comparison with the popular heroes of poetry and the chivalrous times. Yet how inferior is David to Moses in wisdom, in virtue, in strength of mind, and the qualifications of a patriotic ruler and lawgiver : the existence of the Pentateuch in times so long antecedent, even to what are termed the heroic ages, is a kind of miracle ; and seems like the germ of improvement, providentially sown and preserved, until the condition and circumstances of mankind were fitted for its shooting forth and gradually coming to maturity. The progress of righteousness, of spiritual religion, was exceedingly forwarded by king David. By his military achievements he raised the glory of the Hebrew nation to a height it never attained before or since, subduing their enemies far and near, and extending the dominion of his sceptre over the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites, and the Syrians, “ from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates,” according to the promise given to

Abraham¹: yet in the midst of this splendid career of victories and conquests, David's thoughts continually turned to the object he had most at heart, the building of the Temple of God. With this purpose in view, he employed his powerful resources to accumulate immense treasures of gold and silver; and brought up the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem with much solemn pomp, and festival sacrifices. Still David's heart was no more satisfied with the formal ceremonial part of religion, than with the triumph of his arms; he worshipped God in spirit and in truth; the spirit of his profound and ardent devotion is preserved in those beautiful hymns, which have been the delight and comfort of the Church of God in all ages, on account of the unction of sincere piety which mingles with all their varied subjects, sublime images, touches of moral feeling and natural simplicity. The humility of the writer before God, is of the peculiar and deep cast belonging to the Scriptures; and he is full of prophetic intimations of the Messiah, whom this great king calls "his Lord," and announcements of Christ's kingdom of holiness. It is the more extraordinary that the "sweet Psalmist" of Israel

¹ Gen. xv. 18. Numb. xxiv.

should dwell upon this theme, because now was the time when the Hebrew nation touched upon the point of its greatest temporal prosperity in political and ecclesiastical matters ; and David, according to views of mere human foresight, might justly and reasonably have expected, that as the promised ¹ sceptre had at length been bestowed upon the tribe of Judah, their rule would be established, and continued, and gradually extend, over the Gentiles also. The inspired monarch discerned that the prevalence of righteousness was the thing ultimately intended in the Divine counsels, a result which was to succeed the downfall of that flourishing dominion, which at his death he bequeathed to his son Solomon.

The date of the dedication of Solomon's Temple may be fixed in the year of the world 3000, and before Christ 1004. Jerusalem is situated on a cluster of hills, altogether about four miles in circumference, whose rocky and precipitous sides form a natural fortification : the Temple was erected on one of these eminences, towards the east, Mount Moriah, the top having

¹ Gen. xlix. 10.

been levelled for the purpose to a square area, about half a mile in circuit. The outer wall and courts of the Temple occupied this entire space ; but the building itself was not of large dimensions, being not more than one hundred and twenty-two feet in length, and thirty-five feet wide, divided into three parts—the porch seventeen feet, the temple seventy feet, and the Holy of Holies. This last room, called also the oracle, was a cube of thirty or thirty-five¹ feet, entirely overlaid with gold on the inside ; and separated from the temple by a rich curtain or veil of beautiful colours, hung on chains of gold. The treasures of gold and silver amassed by king David to an immense extent, were employed as he designed, in ornamenting the structure, and providing for it the most costly and sumptuous furniture. Yet the value of the materials seems to have been surpassed by the skilful and exquisite workmanship in molten brass, fine linen, and cedar, carved into representations of Cherubims, palm-trees, and flowers. All circumstances of this dedication considered, it may well be deemed the grandest and most impressive spectacle ever witnessed on earth. King Solomon

¹ Lightfoot and Prideaux make the cubit one foot six inches, others one foot nine inches, English.

having assembled the elders of Israel, the heads of the tribes, with the priests and Levites, clad in the vestments of their office, brought the ark of the covenant from the city of David on Mount Sion, in solemn procession, with hymns and music, and deposited it in the Oracle, amidst the jubilees of the people, a joyful and unanimous multitude, thronging through the avenues of the city, and animated by one common desire, not only to witness, but to join, heart and voice, in the public adoration offered in the name of their whole nation, by their Monarch, to the King of kings in heaven. The consecrated memorials in their sight could not fail to awaken in the assembly a recollection of the history of their forefathers, and of the great and holy men of old, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and the judges of Israel; together with a grateful sense of the Divine government and protection, under which the nation had been delivered from the land of bondage, and conducted through the wilderness to that promised inheritance, of which they now, at length, enjoyed complete and peaceable possession. Thus the treasures of nature, and the works of art, were voluntarily offered and combined with the best feelings of mankind, upon occasion of this solemnity: to crown its awful magnificence, a

supernatural power descended, "the cloud, the glory of the Lord, filled the house of the Lord, a fire also from heaven consumed the sacrifices ¹;" and this immediate miracle proved that the living God was still present with his chosen people, and vouchsafed to accept their oblations. In the midst of this scene of glory, appears Solomon, praying, with all humiliation and self-abasement, in the noblest and purest strain of devotion: the dignity of his royal office, the splendour of the offerings, are altogether sunk in the humility of the sincere supplicant, conscious of being a sinner, and the representative of sinners. In conclusion, the king, and all Israel with him, kept a festival-sacrifice, during fourteen days, at which innumerable sheep and oxen were slain: and "the people blessed the king, and went to their tents, joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness of the Lord ²."

¹ 1 Kings viii. 2 Chron. vii.

² 1 Kings viii. 66. Mr. Gibbon, ch. 23. takes occasion to sneer at the numbers of twenty-two thousand oxen, and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep, offered by Solomon at the feast of his dedication. Yet Bishop Heber, in his *Journal*, Vol. II. p. 379, says, "a Rajah, about thirty-five years back, offered sixty thousand animals to sacrifice in one fortnight." In some instances in Scripture (for example, in the computa-

The solemnity of this dedication was not a mere empty pageant, but a sign of that substantial prosperity, with which God, according to the Divine promise, had blessed the Hebrew nation: and, at this conjuncture, they may be considered to have arrived at the height of their temporal greatness. Then they worshipped at Jerusalem in the beauty of holiness: "the land had rest on every side, so that neither adversary nor evil occurred, and Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree." The roots of this strength were struck deep by the warlike exploits and able government of David, during his eventful reign of forty years: but, being a man of blood and war, he was, by Divine intimation, restrained from building the temple, and the execution of the work was reserved for his son. The young monarch began well, particularly in praying to God for an understanding heart, as preferable to all earthly advantages. The petition pleased the Lord,

tion of David's treasures) we may reasonably suppose that the terms hundred and thousand are used indefinitely, according to the practice of all languages, to express very large and excessive numbers. The terms for weights and measures, as talents and cubits, may, like the words pound and league, among ourselves, have had different significations.

who appeared by night in a dream to Solomon, (an extraordinary privilege, not vouchsafed to any other king of his nation,) and granted to him other blessings in addition. At the completion and dedication of the temple, Solomon, in the tenth year of his reign, and the thirtieth of his age, attained the summit of human felicity. He had formed a great alliance by marrying the King of Egypt's daughter : his character stood high among his neighbours for wisdom, and knowledge, and for the magnificence with which he liberally spent his increasing wealth ; and his fame and influence reached distant lands. He reduced to a state of tribute all the inhabitants of Canaan who were not Israelites ; his power extended eastwards beyond the Euphrates, and southwards into Egypt, and on the Red Sea, and placed at his disposal the lucrative traffic of Arabia, Africa, and India. Having entered into an amicable treaty with the King of Tyre, Solomon partook of the benefit of the ships, with which those enterprising navigators, the Phœnicians, traded to all parts of the Mediterranean Sea, and beyond it. On account of all these sources of profit, it is said, "the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he as the sycamore trees that are in the

vale, for abundance ¹." By the especial blessing of Providence, all this glory and wealth were of a peaceable kind, suited to the name of Solomon, and to the appellation of his capital, which are both alike derived from the word Salem, signifying peace.

The most signal instance on record of the total insecurity and instability of human affairs, is that this high and palmy state endured for so short a time, that it may be compared, in the language of the book of Job ², to those water plants, which, unsupplied with moisture, wither while yet in their greenness. In less than forty years after the dedication of the temple, its treasures were plundered by a foreign enemy, and the tribes of Israel divided into two kingdoms never to be re-united. Before that time, Solomon himself, the great, the wise, the pious, lapsed into grievous sins, and by his evil example, infected the people as with a moral plague. Notwithstanding his intellectual attainments, this prince had not the energy and straightforward character of his father. His first error appears to have been the marriage with the king of Egypt's daughter: here was the germ of those vices, the love of women, of

¹ 1 Kings x. 27.

² Job viii. 12.

ostentatious luxury, and of foreign connections, which stained his mature age, and drew him into the most shameful idolatries. These melancholy reverses happened not to the king and the nation in the common course of the mutability of fortune ; they will be understood as a specific accomplishment of the Divine Will, by referring to a remarkable passage in the seventeenth chapter of Deuteronomy, which might have afforded clear and sufficient warning, in the way of prophecy ; but men and nations seem to be fascinated by the sight of danger, so as to lose their self-possession, and run, by a sort of fatality and irresistible impulse, into the very jaws of destruction.

The Israelites are all along commanded by Moses, under the Divine direction, to obey the government of judges ; but in the passage alluded to, the inspired lawgiver plainly intimates, that, in process of time, the people would not be content without a king, and instructions are accordingly given for choosing one ; and then follow these extraordinary prohibitions : “he (the king) shall not multiply to himself horses, nor wives, nor silver and gold.” These are such restrictions as never entered the thoughts of any legislator, acting upon ordinary

political principles ; for they seem calculated to impede the progress of national prosperity. What would Englishmen think, if a passage existed in king Alfred's will, prohibiting the augmentation of the British navy, or the increase of the commercial wealth of the kingdom ? Yet so marvellous are the ways of Providence, that Solomon's fall, and the decline of the national power, are traced directly to the disregard of these prohibitions of Moses, which carry no such consequence on the face of them. Will it be said that the passage was interpolated after the event, and adapted by a cunning forgery to circumstances already past ? A sufficient answer to this very improbable supposition is, that Moses' caution is levelled against "causing the people to return to Egypt;" but the chief enemies of Israel lay in a quite opposite quarter, in Syria and Babylon, as an impostor would not fail to have noticed in a fictitious prediction prepared after the events. The real danger, against which the Israelites were guarded by this mysterious warning, was a casting off the dependence on Divine aid, and an irreligious reliance upon their own strength and power.

These dispensations, proving, experimentally, that prosperity is a more dangerous trial of

human virtue than adversity, formed also a preparation for a new and better covenant than that of Moses. They taught men of piety to look for other than temporal advantages, to consider holiness its own reward here, and to expect "a kingdom not of this world." These sentiments may be traced in the writings of Solomon, composed, probably, in a penitent old age, as in the book of Proverbs, which contains moral lessons of practical wisdom, derived from reason and experience, under an inspiration, of a tone altogether different from the authoritative commands of Moses, and the ordinances, sanctions, and promises of the ceremonial law. More particularly in the work called "Ecclesiastes," this king, who had passed through all vicissitudes of life, proclaims, as with a voice to be heard throughout the globe, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" and in many passages, plainly intimates that the righteous judgment of God will extend beyond this state of things.

Towards the close of Solomon's reign, discontents arose among his people, on account of the exactions of his expensive government; and enemies were permitted to move against him. The Edomite and the Syrian, and above all, Jeroboam,

who, in the emphatic language of Scripture, "made Israel to sin," instigating those internal dissensions, civil and religious, which were never healed, brought weakness and ruin upon the infatuated nation, because "they continually provoked God to jealousy with their strange gods, and to anger with their vanities."

The clouds which had been long thus gathering, broke at length, and descended in a furious storm. Within a year after Solomon's death, (B. C. 975) the folly and incapacity of his son Rehoboam, made opening for the plots of Jeroboam, who having taken refuge from king Solomon's anger in Egypt, now returned, and soon alienated ten tribes from their allegiance to the house of David. Thus the appointment of the kingly office, so earnestly desired by the people in the time of Saul, in froward opposition to the Divine will, as a politic measure for strengthening the power of the nation, by uniting them under one supreme head, proved the very circumstance which gave occasion to the rupture. It was expressly foretold in Solomon's life-time, by the prophet Ahijah, who used the striking symbol of rending Jeroboam's cloak into twelve pieces, long before a struggle had arisen for the crown, when there was long war between the

house of Saul and the house of David : and now the people became familiar with the seditious cry, "To your tents, O Israel."

All Israel, in contradistinction to Judah, made Jeroboam king, but without, in any manner, consulting the Divine will, as Moses had directed. Fearing lest the people, when they went up to do sacrifice at Jerusalem, according to the law, might return to their loyalty to the house of David, this ambitious man made two calves of gold, and set up one at the northern extremity of the country at Dan, and the other at Bethel, within the limits of his own tribe of Ephraim ; and moreover, raised to the priesthood low persons who were not of the tribe of Levi. This idolatry was not intended to abolish the worship of Jehovah : like Aaron's molten image¹, these calves were probably an imitation of the chief Egyptian idol ; and this return to Egypt was in a moral sense another violation of the law. The result in both cases shews the sin and danger of worshipping God in a manner other than what he has appointed, and particularly with figures and idols. Those who can fashion a material emblem of the Deity with their hands, will soon

¹ Exod. xxxii.

proceed to model the Divine attributes, and to construct a religion; according to their fancy and humour, with allowances for sin, and an attention to outward ceremonies, rather than to substantial holiness. The road from bad principles to bad actions has a very easy descent; and thus the Israelites, who worshipped before the calf idol, added wanton and impious practices, after the custom of heathen idolaters. It might, indeed, have been truly argued in the abstract, that God is every where, at Bethel as at Jerusalem; and that a calf of gold is in itself as innocent a figure as the form of cherubim of gold with wings over the mercy-seat. But the latter was commanded by Divine authority; the former was altogether a human device, adopted in defiance of the precepts of that written law, which the Israelites professed to receive as a revelation from heaven. In fact, the new worship was evidently a mere political contrivance, the creature of expediency; and its ministers, instead of being honest and faithful teachers of righteousness, were instruments of Jeroboam's ambition.

The ability of this unprincipled leader is proved by the complete success of the policy he pursued for dismembering Israel. The ten tribes which revolted from the house of David never reunited

with their brethren, and never returned again to worship the God of their fathers at Jerusalem. So far Jeroboam's scheme was accomplished ; but as a warning that the keenest-sighted politicians in their worldly-mindedness often overshoot the mark, and outwit themselves, he altogether failed in the design of aggrandizing his family, the main object for which he sinned and made others sin. God cautioned him by that very remarkable prophecy delivered at his new idolatrous altar erected at Bethel, and by the judgment there executed on himself ; and again by the premature death of his good son. Brave and skilful in war, Jeroboam was signally defeated by the king of Judah, with a force only half his number. These failures prove that talents will not long prevail without sincerity and integrity of character ; they have not the blessing of heaven, and are distrusted by men. Such calamities spread a gloom over the last years of this powerful chieftain : his son and successor reigned but two years, and was then cut off with the whole family, by Baasha, who, in his rebellious conspiracy, only followed the example of Jeroboam.

After the division of the tribes, Rehoboam

continued to serve God for three years ; but then on account of the general wickedness at Jerusalem, the people were deprived of the Divine protection, and the king of Egypt, who had sheltered Jeroboam, and was, we may presume, instigated by him, took the defenceless capital by assault, and carried away all its golden treasures. When king David, at the close of his reign, was tempted in an evil hour to number the people, the amount of fighting men had doubled since the time of Joshua. Israel apparently had never been so strong as then ; they were in possession of Canaan, unanimous under a government, allowed by God, and enjoying a great reputation, which is power. Yet this was the turning point, from which they declined to irrecoverable weakness, and became a prey to their enemies. A decay so sudden, and so complete, is not in the usual course of events, and must be ascribed to the manifest hand of Providence ; particularly if we consider that this nation was forewarned by Divine oracles, that the steps they pursued in their wilfulness would inevitably lead to their destruction. They forsook the Divine counsel, and lost the Divine aid ; and their idolatries, rebellions, and disunions, turned out so many instruments of punishment to themselves. So

short is the race of human glory ; so fatal is the indulgence of human passions to human happiness ; and so vain is the strength of man without Divine support.

Our object is not to pursue the Jewish history in detail, but to trace generally an outline of those leading events, which, affecting the national character, formed a preparation for the Gospel. The kingdom of Israel, having its capital fixed at the hill Shemer or Samaria, lasted in its separate state two hundred and fifty-four years, with various fortune, but without any decided revival of godliness. The kings, with impious fidelity, all followed the example of the founder of the dynasty, and Ahab, having married the Zidonian idolatress, Jezebel, even exceeded the wickedness of Jeroboam. The weakness consequent upon internal dissensions tempted the attack of foreign enemies : the Moabites revolted ; the powerful kings of Syria repeated their invasions, and swept the country of the two tribes and a half to the east of Jordan. A transient gleam of prosperity and splendour was visible under Jeroboam the second ; but confusion ensued after his death. The people continued to reject God's statutes and covenant,

and worshipped molten images, and the host of heaven, and Baal ; and, therefore, God finally delivered them into the power of Shalmanezar, King of Assyria, who besieged Samaria three years, and having taken it B. C. 719. carried the inhabitants away captive into Media, far to the north ; and in order effectually to exclude all hope of return, planted other and heathen inhabitants in the cities of Samaria.

The fall of this unhappy race, self-devoted to destruction, followed as a direct consequence and punishment of their disobedience, in strict accordance with the repeated plain denunciations of those Scriptures, which they acknowledged to be the word of God. The language of Moses to the Israelites is uniform, severe, and cannot be misunderstood, that temporal blessings would reward their dutiful submission to the declared will of Jehovah, and that temporal calamities would chastise their wilful rebellion, and stubborn neglect of the statutes and ordinances of the law, and particularly any lapse on their part into idolatry and heathen customs. Especial warnings were also vouchsafed by the ministry of that succession of extraordinary men, the prophets, who appeared about this time in great numbers and power, prompted by

the Holy Spirit to declare faithfully to an offending people, the impending judgments of God. The prophets may be considered as substitutes and auxiliaries to the Priesthood. Originally, the Priests did not constitute a distinct order ; and Moses is instructed to call the whole body of Israelites, "a kingdom of priests, an holy nation¹;" as in the New Testament all the members of the Christian Church are addressed indiscriminately as saints : and if all professors of the true religion took care to walk worthy of their name and calling, the number of the faithful would be speedily encreased by the progress and dissemination of revealed truth throughout the world. Still in a large community, though the labours of all may ultimately tend to the same result, there must for convenience sake be a division of offices : and, accordingly, after the delivery of the moral law, and the institution of the ceremonies and service of the tabernacle, God appointed one family, that of Aaron, to the Priesthood, and gave him all his tribe, the Levites, as ministers.

The whole polity of the chosen people differs from that of any other nation, being confessedly

¹ Exod. xix.

founded, not upon riches or strength of numbers, or situation and extent of territory, but upon piety, a dutiful regard to the Divine superintendence immediately exercised over their affairs: and it is very observable with what consistency the facts recorded in their history correspond to that one leading principle, so as to afford strong internal evidence of the truth of the whole narrative. The Israelites are delivered out of Egypt, and afterwards gain possession of a promised land, not by human power or contrivance, but by supernatural means; which support and blessing they were forewarned each generation might forfeit for itself by contumacious iniquity, while yet the promises of God, made to their great progenitor, Abraham, would remain sure to his family, and would eventually be all fulfilled. The scheme of Providence is gradually unfolded, making the law an introduction to the Gospel. Moses, the great leader and lawgiver, who writes the account himself, has personally no power or influence, except as he is the instrument for working miracles. He neither claims nor obtains any inheritance of possessions, rank, or office for himself, or his lineage, which sinks into insignificance. Even the tribe of Levi, to which Moses belonged, were scattered, as a

proscribed race, according to the prophecy of dying Jacob¹. The dispersion and dependent state of the Levites, who had no portion of land assigned to them, but subsisted upon the tythes and offerings presented as a religious service, effectually broke their temporal power as a body ; though the plan was admirably calculated, by spreading the individuals of one family as public functionaries, to keep alive the spirit of devotion among the people at large, in perpetuity and uniformity through successive generations. Under an avowed theocracy it might have been expected that the Priesthood should be all-powerful ; and if Moses had been actuated by the ordinary motives of human conduct, it is probable he would have established a permanent authority and government in his own house and tribe, as successful leaders have usually done, not merely through ambition, or for the sake of personal aggrandizement, but as a measure of useful policy in the management of the people under his rule. But we find the reverse of this to be the fact : Moses and the Priests assume no authority independently of the offices expressly allotted to them ; and his kindred are left in

¹ Gen. xlix.

comparative obscurity : all the affairs of the nation are uniformly and consistently referred to the immediate direction of Providence, who raises up deliverers in time of need, choosing out whom he will to be the depository of his gifts ; and what particularly belongs to our subject, they are conducted according to an avowed system, the result and consummation of which is the extension of the Divine blessing upon the sons of Abraham universally, in the fulness of time to all mankind.

During the early times we hear little of the Priests and Levites ; if the religion had been invented and supported by priest-craft, they would undoubtedly have secured to themselves great advantages and distinction, and, above all, power in the state. But it would be difficult to shew a nation, in which the ministers of religion, as a separate body, had fewer immunities and less influence than among the Israelites. Their privileges, for instance the cities of refuge, were appointed rather for the public good of the community, than for the benefit of their order. The exemption of the tribe from warlike services seems, in the tumultuous times, only to have exposed them to the common danger, without means of personal defence ; while the dignity of the priestly

office marked out offenders for exemplary punishment.

The duties of the Priests and Levites are thus summed up : “ To put difference between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean, and to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken¹ ;” and again, “ They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy law : they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar².” The ceremonial part continued to be performed with sufficient diligence : the rites and sacrifices, committed to the charge of this one family, being regularly performed, without intermission, served the main purposes of their institution, in restraining the people from idolatry, and in keeping up among them an habitual and lively sense of the great truth, that for the remission of human sins a sacrifice was necessary, and appointed, which the bloody offerings under the law prefigured only as types. But though ceremonies may be preserved by bodies of men in hereditary succession, moral virtue is not surely transmitted from sire to son ; and even talents fail, or at least the exercise of them is impaired, and the impulse for

¹ Levit. x. 10.

² Deut. xxxiii. 10.

sharpening and fitting them for active use is deadened, among those who are placed by birth, as a matter of course, in certain stations. The great motive for human exertions—necessity, is wanting. From whatever cause, it is evident the priests degenerated as teachers of the moral law ; and God no longer vouchsafed through them the revelations of his will, but raised up, to supply their deficiencies, another set of men, the Prophets, collected indiscriminately from all the tribes, and devoted to religion individually, without any reference to their families. Thus, when the sons of Eli had rendered themselves unfit for their office by notorious profligacy, Samuel was called, by a special miracle, to govern Israel as an upright judge and a spotless prophet ; and to reclaim the people to God's service by his amiable, virtuous, and disinterested character.

In other societies, when the men decline, the system fails with them, but it was not so here ; for the plan, support, and object of the Jewish national institutions, were not of human, but of Divine establishment. This is the proposition on which Moses openly builds the whole structure of the Hebrew government in the abstract : and the truth of it comes out in the history of

the people, not in a laboured, artificial, suspicious manner, as if the tale of events had been moulded by imposture, to coincide with the principle previously laid down, but naturally, easily, without an appearance, or it may be added, the possibility of design ; for the corresponding facts occur after the death of Moses, and have continued, through intervening ages, to this day. In this extraordinary nation, although the religious principle was paramount, the priests did not support the system, but the system supported the ministers of religion, while, at the same time, it cleansed itself from corruptions introduced by the personal defects and vices of priests, kings, and judges. We shall hereafter find that, when judges, kings, and prophets failed, the priesthood revived with primitive vigour, and served as a rallying-point for the preservation of the constitution, long after Judea had become a tributary state.

Samuel, towards the close of his life, instituted schools or colleges of prophets, foreseeing, by the light of inspiration, that the true religion would want support against the refractory and tyrannical Saul, who, in one of his fierce moods, nearly exterminated the priests ¹. Jeroboam, actuated

¹ 1 Sam. xxii.

by a still worse spirit, and finding the ministers of religion opposed to his impious usurpation, and faithful to the house of David, expelled the Levites from the cities in Israel; and they with the priests resorted for refuge to Jerusalem¹. At this important crisis, the prophets present themselves, clothed with a new and extraordinary character, and with powers suited to the emergency. Not marked out by birth, or trained always by education for their great office, but specially called to it by supernatural means, they executed their high commission, as if moved by an irresistible impulse, unsparingly, without fear or favour, keeping themselves unspotted from the world, and remaining aloof for the most part from its connections. Of austere and peculiar habits, a race quite distinct from the tribe of Levi, the prophets chose a lonely and abstemious life, in poverty and seclusion, shunning the haunts of men, and devoted to religious meditation, except when they came abroad to preach repentance and righteousness, to denounce impending judgments, and to foretel future events according to the Divine counsels, particularly by giving plainer and plainer intimations of the

¹ 2 Chron. xi.

coming of the Messiah. As a fit leader at the head of this train of inspired teachers, is Elijah, or Elias, the greatest of the prophets, next to Moses, in miraculous words and deeds, whose history is attended with a mysterious sublimity beyond even the usual solemn tone of the holy Scriptures. He alone, of all men since the deluge, was privileged, like Enoch in the patriarchal age, to be exempt from the common lot of mortality in not tasting death ; and to add a still more signal instance of Divine favour, the spirit of his mission corresponded with that of the immediate forerunner of Christ, “ in making ready a people” prepared for the reception of the Gospel. The ministry of Elijah, and of Elisha, his successor, who lived to a great age, accompanied with continued miracles during seventy years, (from B. C. 910 to 832) no doubt had great effect in checking the progress of idolatry ; for the Lord reserved to himself seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal¹. But still the people at large, following the evil example of their rulers, maintained with hardened obstinacy, the public system of idolatry, in defiance of the prophetic admonitions and Divine warnings. Adventurer after adventurer,

¹ 1 Kings xix.

who usurped the throne of Israel with desperate ambition, Jeroboam, Baasha, Zimri, and Omri, all perished with their entire families. Even Jehu, (B. C. 860) escaped not the contagion of the sin introduced by Jeroboam: this great captain, though influenced in his victorious career by the prophets, and ruling by Divine appointment, after defeating and killing the impious idolatrous kings of Israel and of Judah, and after exterminating, as an instrument of Divine vengeance, the whole family of Ahab, and the priests of Baal in Israel, yet “took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord with his whole heart, and departed not from the golden calves.” Then, the warnings of mercy being slighted, and no hope of amendment appearing among the rebellious, the time for repentance passed away, and that of vengeance arrived, and “the Lord began to cut Israel short ¹.” On account of Jehu’s services against Ahab, the Lord promised that his children, to the fourth generation, should succeed to the throne of Israel; and it came to pass. But after the long reign of Jeroboam the Second, (B. C. 784) the house of Jehu was cut off; and the crown became a prey to military

¹ 2 Kings x. 32.

leaders, who, in succession, murdered each other to seize it, and obtain a precarious possession for a few months or years; until at length the Assyrian kings made an absolute conquest of the country. The disposition of events is, indeed, very remarkable, by which, though the prophecies of the national declension, consequent upon the sins of the Ten Tribes, were punctually and literally fulfilled, yet their ruin still furnished a preparation for the Gospel, which their establishment and flourishing condition could not have done. The connexion with the idolatrous heathen of Canaan produced the fatal results foretold by Joshua xxiii.; "They shall be snares and traps to you, scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land." Events corresponded with the prediction of Ahijah, "That the Lord would utterly cut off the house of Jeroboam, and root up Israel out of this good land, and scatter them beyond the river¹;" and with the more exact prophecy of Isaiah, "Within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people"² The complete and precise fulfilment of these predictions will remain for ever a signal proof of

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 10, 15.

² Isaiah vii. 8.

the inspiration of the holy Scriptures: but though the Israelites were thus extinguished as a separate people for ever, and the ten tribes disappeared as a nation, yet their religion remained in the country, it even revived, and became purified and improved. The Assyrian conqueror transplanted into Canaan, colonies of Babylonians and Cuthites; and these barbarous strangers being afflicted by a Divine visitation of lions, a priest of the Israelites was sent back to teach them how to propitiate the God of the land¹. Probably a remnant of the tribes had been left, or some Israelites returned with this priest; at all events the inhabitants, in process of time, recovered from their mixed and debased religion, and gradually threw off their idolatrous practices. Afterwards (B. C. 409) a temple was erected to the true God on Mount Gerizim; the Samaritans preserved the books of Moses with great veneration in the old Hebrew character; they rejected also the traditions of the Pharisees, and had in some respects clearer and juster notions of the character of the Messiah than the Jews themselves. The very opposition and

¹ 2 Kings xvii. See Discourses on Prophecy by the Rev. J. Davison.

mutual jealousy between the Samaritans and the Jews, excited each party to watch narrowly the principles and conduct of the other, and to guard themselves against being detected by their adversaries in religious errors and degeneracy. But these observations anticipate events which followed the period we are now considering.

Of the sixteen prophets, including Daniel, whose writings have been preserved to us, as part of the inspired word of God, five ¹ lived before, or at the æra, of the dispersion of the ten tribes, (B. C. 719) and among them the great evangelical prophet Isaiah, who first, in distinct terms, declared the promise of the Messiah. These writings form the great chain of connexion between the Old and New Testament: they open more enlarged and purer views of the Abrahamic covenant; instead of laying great stress upon the ritual and sacrifices of the law, they inculcate moral obedience and holiness of heart; instead of holding out expectations of temporal blessings, they teach the people to aspire after spiritual blessings. They do not abrogate the Mosaic institutions, but unfold their true meaning and complete accomplish-

¹ Jonah, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and perhaps Joel.

ment, by extending the object of them from time to eternity, and their promises from one race to all mankind. In particular, they announce the great Deliverer, Redeemer, and Saviour of mankind, of whom Moses and David spake with more obscurity ; and point out the exact time of his coming, and personal marks by which he might be known. "To Christ give all the prophets witness ¹." But as Moses, while proclaiming an assurance of the eventual possession of the promised land to the sons of Jacob, yet withheld all hope of that inheritance from the existing generation, on account of their sins ; so the series of prophets, who, for four hundred years, during the decline of Israel and Judah, continued to foretel the Messiah, and to prepare the way for his kingdom, yet denounced with angry and mournful voices, calamity and woe upon their guilty contemporaries.

These sufferings, like the punishment of the wandering Israelites in the desert, no doubt served, in some degree, to correct the offenders, and with more effect to warn their children and brethren from falling into the same depth of trans-

¹ Acts x. 43.

gression. The kingdom of Judah endured one hundred and thirty-four years after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel; and as Judah was the weaker of the two, and more exposed to enemies, its preservation cannot reasonably be accounted for, except upon the ground of especial Divine protection, vouchsafed according to repeated prophecies. This is the language of Hosea i. 6, "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." The ancient prediction of the patriarch, Jacob, concerning the superiority of Judah over his brethren¹, received its accomplishment, together with the continued Divine promises, securing the stability of David's throne to his lineage², through surrounding dangers, from which an escape appeared hopeless. When the kingdom of Israel began to totter to its fall, a moral support was thrown round Judah, which more than compensated for its physical weakness. A strong

¹ Gen. xlix. 10.

² 2 Sam. vii. 13. 1 Kings ii. 4. Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4, 5.

contrast was early formed between the two dominions: the Priests and Levites fled from Samaria to take refuge in Jerusalem; and while the crown of Israel became the prey of the strongest usurper, the line of David ruled Judah in just hereditary succession. While Ahab was introducing the worship of Baal, and attempting an irreconcilable mixture of idolatry with the true religion, Jehoshaphat, at the same period, improving upon the good example of his father, king Asa, with exemplary piety, "sent Levites and Priests, who had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people¹." (B. C. 910.) A blessing attended this prince, until he was weak and unhappy enough to make a league with king Ahab, and to marry his son and successor to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. The fruits of this unholy confederacy soon appeared: the Edomites shook themselves free from the dominion of the house of David for ever, according to ² Isaac's ancient prophecy; and Athaliah, proving herself a worthy child of such parents as Ahab and Jezebel, not only

¹ 2 Chron. xvii. 9.

² 2 Kings viii. 20. Gen. xxvii. 40.

exerted her influence to set up the worship of Baal at Jerusalem, but destroyed all the seed royal, thus at once avenging the massacre of her family, and by this cruel extirpation of competitors for the throne, clearing the way for the maintenance of her own authority, together with idolatry, at Jerusalem. One little son of the king, Joash or Jehoash, was saved from the midst of the general slaughter, by his aunt Jehoseba, wife of Jehoiada the High Priest. They took their measures warily, and hid the child in some retired places in the temple so well for six years, that Athaliah had no knowledge of his existence. In the seventh year, Jehoiada¹, by a concerted plan with the Priests and Levites, produced Joash publicly in the temple as king, and placed the crown on his head. Athaliah was put to death; and the popular indignation destroyed the house, and images, and Priests of Baal. Thus the Aaronical Priesthood repaid with fidelity the constant protection they received from the family of David, and under God saved his lineage from extinction. It might have been expected that Jehu would have coalesced now (B. C. 870.) with Jehoiada, in

¹ 2 Kings xi.

finishing at Jerusalem the demolition of the idolaters, which he had himself so signally executed in Samaria; and thus all the tribes would have been again united together under one king, and with the same religious worship. But, as we have seen, Jehu turned aside from this opportunity, tempted probably by the ambition of founding a new dynasty, and retaining a separate independent sovereignty. Compromising with his conscience, as men under the delusion of passion easily do, this great leader destroyed idolatry on the one side, while, on the other, following Jeroboam's steps, he established a form of religion, without truth or sincerity, as a mere matter of state policy.

The comparative weakness of Judah is very evident, for in two separate invasions Israel made a conquest of Jerusalem; once under Jehoash (B.C. 826.) who took ¹Amaziah, the king, prisoner, broke down the wall of the city to a great extent, and plundered the temple and the king's house; and again, eighty years afterwards, Pekah ², the last powerful king of Israel, in confederacy with Rezin, king of Syria, besieged Jerusalem, made a great slaughter of the people,

¹ 2 Kings xiv.

² Ibid. xvi.

and carried away two thousand captives, who were speedily released at the remonstrance of the prophet Obed. These calamities were permitted, or rather occasioned, by the impiety of the people of Judah, and of their kings; and they appear to have had the salutary effect of recalling them to a sense of their duty and to obedience. Upon this last occasion, the invasion of two most powerful and inveterate enemies threatened a worse result than the sanguinary tyranny of Athaliah; and the utter destruction of Judah as a nation, or, at least, of the throne of David, appeared inevitable. Their hopes sunk before the formidable confederacy of Syria with Ephraim; the heart of the wicked king Ahaz and the heart of his people "were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind¹." The monarch was too faint-spirited and too ill at ease in his conscience to comply with Isaiah's invitation that he should ask a sign from God: he relied upon the aid of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria², which he purchased with abject submission, with the payment of heavy exactions, and with conforming to the idolatrous rites of Damascus. In this extremity, when Judah

¹ Isaiah vii.

² 2 Kings xvi.

seemed hastening to ruin, both in temporal and religious affairs, like Israel, it pleased God to raise up two signal instruments for reclaiming his people, and establishing the covenant of his promise. The great prophet Isaiah, at this disastrous juncture, pointed out the sure hope of Judah, by appealing “to the law and to the testimony¹ ;” he gave the comfortable promise² of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, unfolded the evangelical doctrines of his³ mediatorial office and vicarious sufferings, together with the future triumphant state of God’s Church⁴, including the calling of the Gentiles to share in its privileges, and the ultimate restoration of the Jews. About this time also it pleased Providence to inspire the good king Hezekiah⁵, who succeeded his father Ahaz, with wisdom and piety, so that he abolished idolatry throughout his kingdom, and carrying on the work of reformation with a firm purpose and steady hand, revived the purity of the Mosaic law, and restored the proper influence of the Priesthood. King Hezekiah celebrated the Passover with extraordinary solemnity

¹ Isaiah viii. 20.

² Ibid. ix. 6. xl. 3.

³ Ibid. liii. 5, 6.

⁴ Ibid. xi. and xlix. liv. lxv.

⁵ 2 Kings xix. 2 Chron. xxx.

at Jerusalem (B.C. 726.) and upon this occasion seems to have conceived the pious sentiment of reuniting once again all the tribes in the national worship, for he sent messengers through all Israel to invite them to the feast. The time was favourable; for the kings of Assyria had removed Jeroboam's golden calves, and Hosea, the last king of Israel, though feeble in government, is represented as the least bad of all who held that sceptre. Probably, Hosea assented to the proclamation of the Passover through his dominions, which some of the weaker tribes accepted; but the chief Ephraimites treated it with scorn. Those who repaired to Jerusalem had their religious zeal so kindled, that they destroyed many idols upon their return. The sublimity and touching simplicity of Hezekiah's prayers, his humility and entire confidence in God, remind us of the hearty devotion of David: his virtues were recompensed by two miraculous¹ interpositions of Providence in his favour, in the sudden destruction of the Assyrian host which came to besiege Jerusalem, and in the deliverance of Hezekiah from sickness, and the prolongation of his life. An imprudent act of

¹ 2 Kings xix. xx. Isaiah xxxvii. 38, 39.

ostentatious vanity sullied the last years of this good king ; he exhibited to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon all his treasures, and thus excited the cupidity of those foreigners, who, as Isaiah then clearly foretold, (at a time when Babylon was an inferior empire, and friendly to the Jews,) were destined to make spoil of all the stores of wealth of Judah, and carry away the people into captivity. Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, disregarding these admonitions, and deserting the service of the living God for idolatrous and bloody superstitions, actually suffered imprisonment in Babylon¹ ; and, notwithstanding his penitence, consequent upon this affliction, his kingdom, during a long reign of fifty-five years, seems to have been in a state of vassalage to the Eastern invaders, particularly to Esarhaddon, whose conquests added Babylon and Chaldea to the Assyrian empire. Amon, Manasseh's son, a hardened idolater, reigned only two years, being slain by his own servants. Then it pleased God, by the apparently weak means of a child eight years old, Josiah by name, to produce a great revival and restoration of the true religion. (B.C. 641.) This admirable

¹ 2 Chron. xxxiii.

and excellent king, who in purity surpassed all his predecessors, began early the work of reformation, destroying the idols throughout all Israel as well as Judah; and in the eighteenth year of his reign ¹, proceeded to repair the temple, having first cleansed it from the instruments of idolatry. While this pious work was going on, Hilkiah the High Priest said, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord." (B.C. 624.) From this expression, and from the circumstance of the king's rending his clothes, when he heard the words of the book read, we may conclude that this was an authentic original writing of Moses himself, deposited in the ark of the covenant; and also that copies of the law were scarce at that time, and not usually read, so that there was a general ignorance of their contents, notwithstanding king Jehoshaphat's ² distribution of them, the exhortations of the prophets, and the appointment of scribes by king Hezekiah ³. The good king Josiah, deeply impressed with the sin and danger of neglecting God's revealed word and commandments, convened a great assembly of all his people at Jeru-

¹ 2 Chron. xxxiv.

² Ibid. xvii. 9.

³ Prov. xxv. 1.

saalem, and having publicly read to them the book of the law, he, together with his subjects, entered into "a solemn covenant before the Lord, to keep his commandments, statutes, and testimonies, with all their heart and soul ¹." This was recurring to the primitive practice and example of Moses, which had doubtless been discontinued and fallen into disuse since the time of Joshua ² : for we find no mention of any public reading of the Holy Scriptures at the solemn religious assemblies of David and Solomon : nor even on the occasion of the pious king Asa's ³ entering into a covenant very like this of Josiah. The sacred volume had been providentially preserved through all the sieges and domestic troubles of Jerusalem, during which the other consecrated deposits of the temple had been perverted to idolatrous uses, and destroyed : and now that the time approached for the demolition of all the most holy monuments of the national religion, the ancient ark of the covenant, and the temple itself, their place was supplied by the public circulation and promulgation of the written word. The Scriptures were never

¹ Exod. xxiv. 7.

² Joshua viii. 35.

³ 2 Chron. xv. 12. B. C. 941.

again concealed or neglected ; from the reign of Josiah may be dated the commencement of a new era, during which the use and knowledge of them spread more and more among the Jews, and from them to heathen nations, and formed the great leading preparation for the Gospel.

Never had the people of God more need of spiritual assistance ; for their temporal affairs now drew to the last extremity of weakness and distress. The Assyrian and Egyptian empires having come into conflict, Judea lay as disputed land between them. Josiah, faithful to his obligations to the Assyrian king, listened not to the offers of being considered neutral on the part of Necho, king of Egypt, but engaged in battle against him at Megiddo¹ in the tribe of Manasseh, and was there mortally wounded ; God in mercy removing him from the impending evils of his country. (B.C. 610.) With this prince was extinguished the last spark of the temporal grandeur and independent sovereignty of the kings of Judah : the shadow rather than the substance of a crown remained to his unworthy descendants for twenty-two years. After a short interval of three months, the Egyptian

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. xxiv. xxv.

deposed one son of Josiah, and placed a second, Jehoiakim, on the throne of Jerusalem, upon the condition of paying to him an annual tribute. In his reign the formidable Nebuchadnezzar commanded the Assyrian power, which, like an irresistible flood, overwhelmed Syria and Palestine to the confines of Egypt. (B. C. 606.) The prophet Jeremiah foretels the seventy years, captivity¹, and in vain exhorts the infatuated Jehoiakim² to repentance, particularly by that Divine communication, which Baruch, the scribe, under his direction, wrote in a roll of a book. Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem without much difficulty, plundered the temple, and carried off as captives to Babylon some of the principal youths³, and among them the prophet Daniel. Jehoiakim was put in chains, but spared upon his submission: afterwards, in consequence of his rebellion, Jerusalem suffered a siege of three years from the neighbouring nations, and this prince, being probably slain in a sally, fell unregretted, and had no other burial than that of an ass⁴, according to Jeremiah's prediction. (B.C. 599.) The same prophet's denunciation against

¹ Jer. xv.

² Ibid. xxxvi.

³ Dan. i. 3. Isaiah xxxix. 7. 2 Kings xx. 18.

⁴ Jer. xxii. 18, 19. xxxvi. 30.

his imbecile son and successor, Jeconiah, received its accomplishment; for he was plucked from his throne, and continued during the remainder of his life a prisoner at Babylon. The Assyrian conqueror, provoked by the perfidy of the kings of Judah, or rather acting unconsciously as the instrument of Divine chastisement, stripped Jerusalem of its consecrated treasures, and of all valuable property: these were carried away to Babylon, and, together with the plunder, all the inhabitants of any station or substance, as slaves and captives: "none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land." Over this ruin of a kingdom, Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah, presided, rather than reigned, for eleven years, and filled up the measure of iniquity, persisting in the evil courses of his immediate predecessors, particularly by disobeying the Divine warnings delivered by Jeremiah. With a mixture of folly and impiety, scarcely credible, Zedekiah imprisoned¹ the faithful prophet, and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who, having gotten possession of his person, had his sons slain before his face, then put out his eyes, and carried him in chains to Babylon.

¹ Jeremiah xxxii.

Thus miserably fell the last king of the house of David, dishonoured, and more despised than pitied, in the depth of his affliction. By order of the barbarous conqueror ¹, the temple of Jerusalem was set on fire, and consumed, with all its precious materials, and the venerable memorials of antiquity and holiness: the same conflagration destroyed the king's palace, and the principal houses; and the walls of the city were reduced to ruins, (B. C. 588.) The prophet Jeremiah, seeing his sad predictions fulfilled, has lamented over Zion, thus fallen and desolate, in a strain of woe, which mixes, in an unexampled manner, the deepest and most plaintive sorrow, with solemn feelings of self-abasement, and of dutiful resignation to Divine justice.

To all appearance, Judah was now overthrown, like Israel, and extinguished as a nation without remedy or hope of recovery. Judah had sinned, like Samaria, by idolatry and impenitent rebellion; the foreign conqueror had seized and destroyed Jerusalem, with equal, or worse, severity and cruelty, and had carried away the inhabitants from their native land, with the same purpose of utter extirpation. Yet Israel, the

¹ 2 Kings xxv. 2 Chron. xxxvi.

stronger and more numerous community, perishes ; while Judah is preserved, and, after the appointed period, experiences a political resurrection. These facts were not probable beforehand ; they did not happen according to the usual course of human affairs : it will be difficult, or rather impossible, to account for them by the operation of second causes, or otherwise than as events overruled by Providence, to make part of one uniform plan and great scheme for the moral government of mankind.

The demolition of the temple, and of the ark of the covenant, which it contained, seemed a mark of the dissolution of that covenant ; as if all traces of the peculiar connexion between God and his chosen people were henceforth to be obliterated. It is also very remarkable, that the calamity was presignified, even at the time when the Lord accepted Solomon's offering, and sanctified the temple, declaring in a vision, " Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually ¹:" for the Divine warning is immediately added of judgments which should be executed upon sinful Israel, " I will pluck them

¹ 1 Kings ix. 2 Chron. vii. See Discourses on Prophecy, by Rev. J. Davison, p. 193.

up by the roots out of my land which I have given them ; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a by-word among all nations." If Judah, after suffering deportation to a foreign distant land, had imperceptibly melted away, and lost its national character (a result which might reasonably have been expected, according to the example of Israel, and of other nations generally in similar circumstances), the race of Abraham would have been no more heard of, except in history, and the writings of Moses and of the prophets must have been regarded as curious monuments indeed of antiquity, and venerable records exemplifying the mercies and judgments of the supreme Governor of the world, but still restricted to times past. Their authority, as an inspired revelation, for the guidance of mankind, would have been interrupted, if the Jewish nation had been entirely extinguished ; and at the same time would have perished all hope of the realization of the promises of future blessings, temporal and spiritual, obscurely delivered in those Scriptures. Quite a different and opposite effect was produced by the dispersion of the Jews : for, from the period of the great change

produced by this calamity in their outward condition, the thoughts of the people were turned less to temporal prosperity, and more to religious obedience. The word of God appeared a precious and venerable deposit, the comfort of their affliction, their only sacred relic ; they studied it carefully, and learnt to expect and prepare for future dispensations of the Divine will. Its apparent inconsistencies were gradually explained by the course of events ; the promises of God made to Abraham, and Judah, and David, were reconciled with the punishments inflicted on guilty individuals, and particular generations of their race. The true design of adversity, as a paternal chastisement, and its proper uses of reformation, began to be understood, according to the Psalmist's pious sentiment, " Before I was afflicted, I went astray ; but now have I kept thy word ¹." The impressions made by this salutary lesson were very much strengthened by the exhortations and admonitions of the prophets of the captivity. These inspired teachers utter a very different language from Moses, who promised worldly advantages as a reward for obedience : they speak of a spiritual recompence, " of a

¹ Psalm cxix. 67.

ransom from the power of the grave¹;" that "the just shall live by his faith²;" that "when the wicked turneth away from his wickedness, he shall save his soul alive³:" they explain the true meaning of the law, by inculcating the doctrine, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings⁴;" "obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people⁵." In some passages, as in the vision of dry bones⁶ of the prophet Ezekiel, an intimation is given of the resurrection in a future state after death. The prophets lay little or no stress upon rites and ceremonies, and upon a lineal descent from Abraham; they teach the innate depravity of man, the necessity of repentance and faith, and of an obedience of moral virtue. These religious principles are not arbitrary, or confined to one people; they carry reason with them, and are consonant to human nature and common sense, and adapted to all mankind; they are a beginning of that preparative discipline for the Gospel, which John the Baptist urged with more clearness and force.

¹ Hosea xiii. 14.

² Ezekiel xviii. 23.

³ Jeremiah vii. 22.

⁴ Habakkuk ii. 4.

⁵ Hosea vi. 6.

⁶ Ezekiel xxxvii.

An explanation of these tenets has often been found the best introduction by which a Christian missionary can open the minds of the heathen to understand and receive the pure doctrines of the Gospel. The Lord's controversy "is intelligible to all the inhabitants of the whole earth: he does not demand, he does not approve or accept bloody sacrifices, costly ceremonies, the outward ritual of superstition; but what he requires of thee, O man, is to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ¹."

¹ Deut. x. 12. Micah vi. 8.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE HISTORY OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL.

THE condition of the exiles could not be otherwise than mournful, according to that emphatic description, "By the waters of Babylon we sate down and wept¹;" yet not so much on account of actual suffering, like their forefathers in Egyptian bondage, as of their privations, and the cherished remembrance of their lost home, the country of Canaan, the city of Zion, the worship of the Temple, and their national independence. The lion of Judah was not yet tamed to subjection. Still their misfortunes and weakness sobered and united the Jews, and preserved them from a mixture with the idolatrous heathens, and an unprincipled compliance with those forbidden customs, into which, in the

¹ Psalm cxxxvii.

thoughtlessness of prosperity, they had been continually seduced. The influence of the prophets, unchecked by irreligious kings and ambitious leaders, prevailed greatly; and these inspired teachers mingled encouragement and consolation with lamentations and rebukes. Rays of hope, giving a prospect of better days, broke through the deep dejection of Jeremiah; and the wild and troubled imagery of Ezekiel, which resembles the storm of the elements in the natural world, being full of gloomy magnificence, terror, and sublimity. Under these circumstances, the Jews, continuing faithful to their religion, ingratiated themselves with their conquerors in the land of captivity, by their well-regulated conduct as a body, and by the talents, virtues, and services of individuals. Indeed their religion, founded on a belief in the Providence of one supreme living God, became an object of respect to the heathen, particularly when accompanied with miracles and prophecies. The story of Daniel, whose character is one of the most perfect any where described, is a counterpart of Joseph's advancement in Egypt: and God enabled that great prophet to declare, in a mysterious manner, a succession of events in the great empires of the world, the fulfilment of

which greatly affected the fortunes of the Jewish people, before the expiration of the period of seventy weeks, after which, Daniel foretold—“The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.” (chap. ix.) To this prediction of Christianity, are to be added intimations, in the same prophet, of a reward awaiting the righteous in immortality, which the Gospel clearly disclosed.

The probability was, that the little community of Hebrews would now be absorbed among the native inhabitants of the country, as their more numerous brethren had been, and as is usually the case with those who settle in a foreign land, either as captives, or colonists, or even as invaders and conquerors. It might also, with reason, have been expected, judging before the event, that if these captives were destined, by the special interference of Providence, to preserve their polity, and in some future ages to spread their religion, still that extension would have been eastward. The Asiatics had at that time attained more civilization than other nations; and traces of their having imbibed a knowledge of the one true God from the Pentateuch, are to be found in the tenets of Zoroaster¹, and in

¹ Prideaux's Connection, Part I. p. 224.

the Decrees¹ of the Persian monarchs: the Hebrews were oriental in their descent, customs, connections, and language; and it is remarkable, that after the captivity, they adopted the Chaldaic, or square character of writing, instead of the ancient Hebrew, which the Samaritans retained. Nor were proselytes wanting, for we read in the book of Esther, that “many of the people of the land became Jews².” All these circumstances would have warranted the conjecture at the period we are speaking of, either that the religion of the holy Scriptures would have sunk into oblivion, like many false religions; or that it would have made progress to the east, as Mahometanism afterwards did. The will of Providence was otherwise; and without attempting to scrutinize presumptuously the Divine purposes, we may be allowed to trace some secondary causes, which drew the children of Abraham towards the west, and prepared the way for the propagation of the faith of Abraham, with its accompanying blessings, among Europeans. These causes were principally three, namely, the return of the Hebrews to Jerusalem, and their settlements in Egypt and Lesser Asia; the pre-

¹ Ezra i. 2.

² Esther viii. 18.

valence of the Grecian arms and literature ; and the establishment of the vast empire of the Romans.

I. The national spirit of the Jews, instead of being abated by captivity, kindled into greater ardour of patriotism. Intimations are scattered in the Scriptures, of their being treated occasionally with extreme cruelty and indignity by the Babylonians¹ ; against this unworthy usage, they found refuge then, as they have in after times, in their own pride of character, and a lofty feeling, that they were a race, chosen out by the supreme Being, from the rest of mankind, and appointed for some high destiny and superior privileges, which, though deferred for a time, were reserved for them on the certainty of the Divine promises, and would, at a mature season, undoubtedly be all fulfilled. These high expectations, the prophets continued to foster as a matter of sacred duty, and in particular, taught the people to look forward to a return to their native land at no distant period. Jeremiah actually limited the duration of the captivity ; adding this significant proof of his belief in his own inspired predictions, that before leaving Jerusalem he bought an

¹ Psalm cxxxvii. Lament. ii. 11.

estate¹, and concealed the written evidence of the purchase, in full assurance the property would be re-possessioned by his posterity.

The Jews could not but behold with satisfaction the overthrow of the Babylonian empire by Cyrus, who having succeeded to the supreme authority over both Medes and Persians, now became master of all the east. (B. C. 536.) It pleased God, chiefly by the influence of his prophet Daniel, to incline the heart of this great sovereign to restore the Jews to their own country, and to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, in fulfilment of recent prophecies. Taking the benefit of the decree of Cyrus, which acknowledges the Lord God of Israel to be the Lord God of heaven², not quite fifty thousand persons returned to Jerusalem, including some Israelites and servants: so diminished was the population, in comparison of their former numbers in Canaan. Yet this is more than double the number of the persons carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar. The foundations of the new temple were laid soon after their return, with great acclamations and thanksgivings of the people: but, upon this

¹ Jeremiah xxxii.

² Ezra i.

joyful occasion, many of the priests, and Levites, and fathers, who had seen the first temple, “wept with a loud voice¹,” overcome by various conflicting feelings and thoughts, suggested by the eventful changes of their fortunes, by a remembrance of ancient friends and holy men now removed from the earth, and by a comparison of the diminished splendour of this new edifice; which, though of the same dimensions, was inferior to the first temple in riches and ornaments, had not the same crowded assembly of worshippers, with the magnificence of royalty at their head, and, above all, wanted the sensible manifestation of the Divine presence.

An unexpected obstacle impeded the work on the part of the Samaritans, whom the Jews refused to associate with themselves in this religious labour; being unwilling to mix in the service of the true God with those who had admitted an incongruous and idolatrous worship. The Samaritans or Cuthites, decided heathens of low origin, as the Jews contemptuously called them, consisting of obscure remains of the ten tribes, blended with the Assyrian colonists, being the more numerous body, would have over-

¹ Ezra iii. 12.

powered the Jews, if incorporated in the same community, and made themselves masters of the city, Jerusalem, which was probably their great object. Then the remnant of the Israelites would no longer have remained a distinct people; the purity of their race, and, in particular, the genealogy of the Messiah would have been extinguished and lost. These "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" (as they are styled¹) thwarted "the children of the captivity" by false underhand accusations of rebellion, which they supported with bribes at court; and thus delayed the completion of the temple for twenty years. But the Jews, stimulated to perseverance by their prophets, Haggai and Zachariah, made application to Darius, king of Persia, in the second year of his reign, and obtained a confirmation of Cyrus' original decree in their favour, and finished the building, celebrating a solemn and joyful dedication with sacrifices and offerings and the observation of the Passover. (B.C. 515.) The prophet Haggai foretels (chap. ii.) "that the glory of this latter house should be greater than of the former," inasmuch as it should receive the Messiah, "the desire of all nations."

¹ Ezra iv.

The long reign of the Persian monarch, Darius Hystaspes, and also that of Xerxes (probably the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther) passed away; about which time were laid the foundations of the two states of Greece and Rome, destined to attain a height of power, and to exercise an extensive influence, which, at different periods, materially affected the condition of the Jews. Jerusalem enjoyed an interval of tranquillity, while the worship of God was established in the temple there: and in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, (B. C. 457.) Ezra, the Priest, "a scribe of the law of the God of heaven," received a most favourable and extensive commission from that monarch over the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of his nation, with "silver and gold freely offered to the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem¹."

Afterwards (B.C. 444.) the same king permits Nehemiah, his cup-bearer, to visit the land of his fathers, for the express purpose of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The Persian government had begun to feel the warlike power of Greece, and having been lately defeated with

¹ Ezra vii.

great loss, off Cyprus, by the Athenian General ¹, Cimon, who pursued their ships to the Phœnician coast, they adopted the policy of fortifying Jerusalem as a strong frontier town, defended by a garrison of people, upon whose national spirit and fidelity they could alike depend. The re-edification of the fortress was a service of danger, on account of the attacks made upon the Jews by their old rancorous enemies, the Samaritans, and other neighbours. Nehemiah was obliged to keep half the number of those under his command, armed and on the watch, while the other half were employed in building the walls, and the builders worked with their swords by their sides : so much spirit and industry united soon completed the undertaking. After the walls were finished, a public dedication of them to God, in whom the confidence of the people reposed for protection, was solemnized with processions, and hymns chaunted, and music, and universal rejoicing, so that “ the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.” Very different would have been the feelings of these Jews, could they have penetrated into futurity, and been warned by anticipation that of all fortified places in the

¹ Plutarch, Cimon.

world, their beloved city, now prepared again for defence, was destined to be the one most exposed to the miseries of protracted siege, and the massacres and oppressions of enraged conquerors.

The strength of Judah consisted not in walls of stone. The religious reformation of the nation was, in the emphatic language of Ezra, "a reviving" from God (ix. 9.) and continued an animating principle of social union far more strong and durable than political advantages, or territorial possessions. This eminent prophet proceeded with equal zeal and prudence in the work of restoration, and had influence to induce the Priests, and Levites, and people, to divorce their strange or heathen wives; which intermarriages, contrary to the scriptural law¹, were probably the chief cause that the ten tribes could be no longer discriminated. Especially Ezra was inspired to exert himself in the sacred cause of preparing for general use the volume of the written word of God, by adopting the beautiful Chaldaic character, by collecting the genuine compositions of the prophets, and by compiling

¹ Deut. vii. 3. Ezra ix. x.

from ancient records the two books of Chronicles, and perhaps also of Kings. The universal ¹ tradition of the Jews ascribes this settlement of the canonical authority of the Scriptures to Ezra, whom they, therefore, venerate as a second Moses, considering him as first president of the great synagogue, consisting of one hundred and twenty members, among whom were the three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, whose writings were afterwards included in the sacred canon in the time of Simon the Just. Besides being the appointed instrument in this most important labour of piety, Ezra established the practice, necessary to make it useful, of reading the Scriptures publicly and regularly, which, among the Jews, from that day, continued under all their vicissitudes to the time of Christ, and familiarized the people with the expectation of the Redeemer. After Nehemiah had finished the walls, instead of relying upon his own work as a defence, he applied himself to the more important business of spreading religious instruction, after the example of Moses ² and Joshua :

¹ Prideaux, Connect. Part I. B. 5. p. 321. Horne on the Scriptures. Vol. II. p. 5, 6.

² Deut. xxxi. 12. Josh. viii. 34.

for this purpose, Ezra ¹, the Priest, the governor's worthy associate, being raised with seven assistants on a pulpit or platform of wood in the street, read and explained the book of the law publicly to all the people, men and women. The impression was much greater than the teachers had anticipated; "for all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law," humiliated before God at once by a sense of ignorance and sinfulness, and there was some difficulty in comforting them for the time. In obedience to what they heard, and under the direction of their rulers, the people kept the feast of tabernacles; and afterwards having observed a religious fast, with confession of sins, they entered into a solemn covenant, "written out and sealed by the Princes, and Levites, and Priests, binding themselves by an oath and a curse to walk in God's law, and to do all the commandments of the Lord."

By this sacred engagement, the Jewish constitution may be said to have been re-established. Nehemiah, having been absent for some years at Babylon, upon his return to Jerusalem, set him-

¹ Nehem. viii. ix.

self to reform some abuses, which had crept in, with his accustomed energy, by enforcing the payments of offerings and tithes, the observance of the Sabbath, and the law against intermarriages with strangers. In particular, he expelled Manasseh, the grandson of the high priest, because he had married a daughter of Sanballat, chief of the Samaritans, who then, with permission of the Persian king, built a temple on Mount Gerizim, which seems to have remained till our Saviour's time, in Samaria, and constituted Manasseh the high-priest¹. Thenceforth, says Josephus, the discontented at Jerusalem, those who married strange wives, and profaned the Sabbaths, and were refractory to religious discipline, took refuge in Samaria: he adds, that it was the custom of the Samaritans to deny all relationship with the Jews, if in adversity, but when good fortune prevailed in their affairs, to claim a common descent from Jacob². These statements carry an appearance of exaggeration; but we find traces in the book of Ecclesiasticus³, and

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xi. 8. The chronology is very confused; but the event is certain, and may be placed, according to Dr. Prideaux, B. C. 408.

² *Antiq.* ix. 14. 3.

³ "That foolish people that dwell in Sichem." *Ecclus.* i. 26.

in many parts of the New Testament, of that rancorous discord and implacable animosity, which prevented the two people from having any sort of communication with each other. From these evil passions and contentions, Providence produced good; for the Samaritans were reclaimed from idolatrous practices, and diligently adhered to the holy Scriptures, apart from traditions, while the Jews were piqued, in opposition to those watchful adversaries, to preserve with purity that worship on which they prided themselves.

Josephus¹ ably defends his countrymen from the charge of being singular in excluding from their society those who have different notions of religion, and different modes of living, by the examples of the Greek states of greatest reputation, Lacedæmon and Athens: for the Spartans would not admit foreigners, nor allow their own people to travel; and the Athenians (B. C. 420.) condemned Diagoras to death, and banished Protagoras, for atheism, and suffered not Socrates to live, chiefly because he was accused of holding conversations, contrary to their laws, about the gods.

As the Persian government held the sword,

¹ Against Apion. B. II. § 37.

there were no open hostilities between the Jews and the Samaritans, but they settled down mutually into an obstinate sullen aversion ; yet both parties looked forward to a better state of things, under the promised Deliverer, either in this world or the next. The Samaritans made no claim to miraculous interposition in their favour ; and the Jews could no longer consult the Divine Spirit by Urim and Thummim ; the heavenly glory of the Shechinah, or Presence of the Deity, visited not the second temple, nor did the holy fire rest on its altar, and the spirit of prophecy was departing. Under these privations, the people of God waited for "the bringing in of a better hope" than the law, in the consolations of the holy Scriptures : as the pomp of ceremonies and sacrifices was necessarily abridged, they became more attentive to observe the moral ordinances and the letter of the law, and as circumstances deprived them of temporal power and prosperity, they were induced to expect and prepare for the Divine favour in a future state of being. Before the Babylonian captivity, the Jews had been so ready to mix with idolaters, and to fall into their profane customs, that they

¹ Hebrews vii. 19.

could not be retained faithful to their own pure religion, by evident miracles, and severe chastisements; but after that period they generally shewed an aversion to idolatry; an improvement which can only be attributed to an increased knowledge of the Scriptures, in consequence of their being read in the public worship. It must be admitted that their devotion degenerated often into minute and superstitious particulars, offensive peculiarities in matters of little moment, and repulsive and unsocial manners.

The character of Nehemiah stands deservedly high; together with Ezra, he may be considered the restorer of his nation; exemplifying all the virtues of a good governor, by liberality, industry, vigilance, and above all by a consistent piety. Of the same æra is Malachi, the last of the prophets; (B.C. 400) he gives plain intimations of the diffusion of the knowledge of true religion among the Gentiles, and of the coming of one in the spirit and power of Elias, as the forerunner of a great visitation. These prophecies were never afterwards lost sight of, and together with other corresponding predictions, particularly that determinate period of seventy weeks, stated by Daniel, (chap. ix.) they excited the expecta-

tion, not only of the Jews, but also of all those to whom the Jewish Scriptures became known, and kept alive in the hearts of God's people a spark of hope, while they watched for the consolation of Israel.

• II. How far this religious influence extended, we shall be better able to judge, by a brief survey of some of the effects produced by the prevalence of the arms and literature of Greece. As the inspired writings here fail us, we must look for information concerning the history and state of Judea, during this interval of time before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, to other sources; and, happily, we now come to some firm ground of profane history. The value, indeed, of the sacred writings, is not always appreciated sufficiently as a mere history of mankind, during the primitive ages, of which there is no other authentic record; but some few facts are transmitted, dimly seen through the mist of antiquity, like forms with distorted shapes, and of dimensions exaggerated beyond the reality. There stand the pyramids of Egypt; but these enormous monuments of human labour and perseverance do not tell their own story. The narrative of Moses, being the only distinct, intel-

ligible, probable account, of the formation of the world, and of the events of the earliest periods, is for that reason, among others, to be ascribed to inspiration; as the extraordinary fortunes and continuance of the sons of Jacob present evidence of Divine interposition in their affairs, because no other family has prospered under the same vicissitudes, nor experienced so long duration.

Cyrus, the appointed restorer of the Jews, having pushed his conquests to the western extremity of lesser Asia, there defeated Croesus, the rich and good king of Lydia, and took his capital, Sardis. Thus the Persian power came in contact with the Greek colonies; disputes and contests ensued between them; and, on one occasion, the Athenians, who had just expelled the Pisistratidæ, and established a democracy, were persuaded to send twenty ships to the assistance of the Ionians. The Spartan king had been applied to and prudently declined; but the Athenian democracy, in their eager, fickle, and restless mood, rushed into an enterprise apparently of little moment, but which was the proximate cause of the irruption of the Asiatics into Europe. The Greeks crossed the Ægean or Archipelago, and, in conjunction with

their confederates, took and plundered Sardis ; a fire arose accidentally in the tumult, and as the houses were composed of wood and combustible materials, it quickly spread and consumed the city. It was not likely this outrage would be passed over without vengeance by that haughty empire, which had only heard of the petty states of Greece to despise them : perhaps a pretext was seized for employing the Persian armies, which in inactivity became dangerous at home. It was not till ten years subsequent to the burning of Sardis, and after many abortive attempts at invasion, that a Persian fleet, after destroying Eretria, in the Island Eubœa, disembarked a very large force on the opposite coast of Attica ; which brought with them Hippias, son of Pisistratus, with the design of replacing him in the supreme power at Athens. The storm had been foreseen ; but there was so much jealousy and disunion between the Grecian states, that they were slow to move in the common cause, and the Athenians were left to fight the battle single handed. They were not, therefore, dismayed, but their small army marched forth to the narrow plain of Marathon, (B.C. 491.) ten miles from Athens ; and there ten thousand Greeks, under the command of Miltiades, utterly de-

feated and routed the vast force of the Persians, horse and foot, with great slaughter, and drove them to their ships. This victory, perhaps the most glorious on record, and achieved equally by the skill of the general, and the steadiness of the soldiers, had a great effect in all subsequent engagements, in encouraging the Greeks, and dispiriting the Asiatics, who could no longer rely on their superior numbers. Those gallant men, who thus first came forward to risk their lives for their country, have made the name of Marathon renowned throughout the world; and their example still kindles in ingenuous minds patriotism, and the love of liberty and honour.

The free, warlike, and enterprising spirit of the Greeks, was strengthened by the novel power of literature, which now began to arise among them, and quickly attained a perfection of good taste. Herodotus, the father of history, recited his compositions publicly in the eighty-second olympiad, (B.C. 445); and gained more applause and admiration from the assembly than the victors in the games. Thucydides, then a boy, was present, and caught an emulation, which enabled him, in mature years, to excel his master, and all other historians; for, in describing facts and characters on the little territory of Greece, he

has laid open the policy of different states, the causes of events, and the motives of human actions, with so much truth and penetrating sagacity, that his work contains matter applicable to all times and countries, exhibited with sound good sense, and an energy and precision, which tax the powers of that incomparable language. About the same time, in the magnificent age of Pericles, flourished the dramatic poets, orators, and philosophers; and among these last, that extraordinary man, Socrates, who, to use Cicero's expressions, (*Tusculan. v. 4.*) first brought philosophy down from the clouds, and vain speculations on the stars and heavenly bodies, to attend to the business of life and manners in towns and families, and teach virtue on earth; though he was unable to teach virtue the way to eternal happiness in heaven. Socrates, and his scholar Plato, who was conversant with the learning of the Egyptians, and the Persians, and probably had some knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures, may be considered the fountains of moral philosophy among Europeans¹. Xenophon succeeded, and Demosthenes, and Aristotle, all of them, to this day, unequalled in their respective excel-

¹ Cicero *Academ. lib. i. sec. 4.*

lencies. These writers, throwing aside obscurities, redundancies, and mean thoughts and expressions, and empty exaggerations, please and instruct the reader by an easy, graceful, natural simplicity, by clear reasoning, and by a judicious, and therefore forcible, appeal to the passions. The tendency of their writings, like those of Homer, is extremely favourable to natural piety and benevolence, to what is honourable and virtuous, "lovely and of good report." Their effect on different generations of mankind it is impossible to calculate; it has been infinitely more powerful and lasting than the victories of the Grecian spears, which we shall soon have to trace beyond the Euphrates. It may be thought superstitious to consider the Greek literature as a preparation designed by Providence for Christianity: but the facts are undeniable, that it contributed to make the language almost universal, introduced a general love of reading, and from the avowed and notorious failure of the wisest men, in treating of a future life, shewed the absolute necessity of Divine instruction on that particular subject. Thus was the way opened for the reception of the holy Scriptures among the heathen.

The sudden display of genius, and great powers

of mind, may be said to have been occasioned by the establishment of the democracy at Athens; when the citizens let loose to freedom and equal rights, felt a generous rivalry, very beneficial to their country, to surpass each other in the race of honourable distinction. Before we give too much admiration to the ancient state of liberty, it must be considered, that in the little district of Attica, scarcely larger than the county of Cornwall, there were, in its most populous state, about thirty thousand free families¹, and four hundred thousand slaves; and that in the exercise of power, Demus, or the people, who were, in fact, the aristocracy of freemen, behaved with arbitrary, capricious, and ungrateful tyranny.

Nine years after the battle of Marathon, (B.C. 480) Xerxes, the son and successor of Darius Hystaspes, crossed the Hellespont on a bridge of boats, with an immense armament, expecting to overwhelm Greece as with an irresistible torrent. The Persians must have had some misgivings of the result of their enterprize, when they found their whole mass stopped at the straits of Thermopylæ by a handful of devoted Greeks. But

¹ Mitford's Greece, chap. v. sec. 4. Plutarch's Pericles, Athenæus Deipnos. chap. vi.

they overran Attica, and Xerxes enjoyed the short and dear-bought triumph of entering Athens as a conqueror. The citizens had previously consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, according to their extreme superstition; and taking the advice of the priestess, interpreted, or dictated, by the sagacity of Themistocles, had deserted the city, and betaken themselves to their wooden-walls, or ships. The battle of Salamis followed, in which, before the eyes of Xerxes, the Persian fleet was entirely defeated and scattered; and this disaster so dismayed the monarch that he fled in all haste, as he could, back to Sardis. His army remained and wintered in Thessaly and Macedonia; and the next year, the Persians took Athens a second time, and made great destruction with fire and sword, but the citizens escaped, as before, to the neighbouring islands. The confederate forces of Greece met at Plataea, and there defeated the foreigners with so great carnage, that comparatively few returned across the Hellespont: and by a fortunate coincidence, on the same day, the remainder of the Persian fleet was destroyed by the Ionians, off the coast of Asia. We may wish for some accounts on the other side, upon the supposition that the Greek writers have exaggerated, from

partiality to their countrymen : but the victories must have been complete to produce this consequence, that Greece was never again invaded by the Persians.

The Asiatic court took another, a more subtle and more sure method of weakening the enemy ; by fomenting the internal divisions and inveterate quarrels of the independent Grecian states with each other ; by bribing influential men ; and particularly by receiving with great courtesy and liberality those statesmen, who, from time to time, were expelled by the factions of their country, or left their home in disgust, but still retained considerable power in Greece, by their abilities, connections, and intrigues.

After the expulsion of the foreigners, the Athenians busied themselves in rebuilding their city, which the wisdom of Themistocles fortified with walls, and the fine taste of Pericles, assisted by the statuary Phidias, adorned with marble buildings, the mutilated remains of which still excite admiration by exquisite beauty of proportion, and architectural effect. But the real pre-eminence of Athens was owing to that spirit of the citizens which still survives in the attic writings. The authors were, many of them, actively engaged in the transactions of those

tumultuous times, which by exciting and exercising the mind, improved its powers. The versatile temper and maritime pursuits of the Athenians involved them in all commotions of that period, far or near, by sea and land; and particularly in that fatal Peloponnesian war, which after continuing twenty-seven years, terminated in the capture of Athens by the Lacedæmonians. (B.C. 404.)

Under Xerxes, and during the long reign of forty years of his successor Artaxerxes Longimanus, the governors of Lesser Asia afforded shelter to many illustrious Greek fugitives, among others to Themistocles and Alcibiades. Mercenaries from that country began to serve in the Persian armies; and when Cyrus the younger marched from Sardis towards Babylon with the design of dethroning his brother, (B.C. 401) he carried with him a large body of Greek stipendiary soldiers. Cyrus being killed in battle not far from Babylon, and the expedition being thus broken up, the ten thousand Greeks found themselves in the heart of the enemy's country, destitute of all resources but their arms, valour and discipline. The safe retreat of this compact force along a march of two thousand miles, has been immortalized by the agreeable narrative of their

commander, Xenophon, whose style is a model of elegant simplicity. The success of this brave and amiable leader in his daring enterprise, afforded a proof as solid as the victories at Marathon and Platæa of the superiority of Grecian over Asiatic soldiers. These exploits formed an encouragement to the Macedonian kings, after they had subdued the free Greek states by arms, by bribes, by fomenting discord among them, to attempt at last, at the head of united Greece, the invasion of Persia.

The extraordinary abilities of Philip, king of Macedon, served the purposes of his ambition in constructing the best disciplined and appointed army the world had then seen. After the battle of Cheronæa he became master of Greece ; and having managed to be appointed General-in-Chief of all the Greek forces, was preparing to lead them across the Hellespont, when he was cut off by assassination. He left his son, Alexander, the heir of his power, his talents, and his ambition ; and that young prince, after first subduing those states of Greece, which broke out into revolt on the death of Philip, set out at the age of twenty-two years (B.C. 334) with an army of thirty thousand men, to conquer the

world; and succeeded. The course of the stream of his victories brought Alexander to Jerusalem, after he had taken Tyre, which held out a siege of seven months. After Nehemiah, acting with more probity than Themistocles, and with equal foresight, energy, and patriotism, had actually completed the walls of Jerusalem, and made a reformation of religion, there is a chasm in the Jewish history, which presents almost a blank for seventy or eighty years. The Jews continued to live under the government of their High Priests, as a colony subject to, and dependent on, the Persian empire: and their fortified city, like Gaza, must have been a stronghold of great importance to that state in its frequent wars with the Egyptians. The Persian rule, always mild, was extremely favourable to the Jews; and their only annoyance seems to have been from the Samaritans, who never forgot the offence of being excluded from assisting at the repair of Jerusalem, still more embittered to them because they were compelled to pay the taxes of the province. The solitary melancholy memorial of this interval of time consists in Josephus's account of the atrocious murder committed by the High Priest of the Jews, in the Temple, on his brother, whom he suspected of

an attempt to supplant him in his office (B.C. 366). In consequence of this odious crime, the Persian governor polluted the sanctuary by entering it, and seized this pretext for laying additional taxes on the Jews.

Josephus¹ relates that Alexander, after taking Tyre, proceeded to Jerusalem; and having met the High Priest at the head of a venerable procession a little distance from the city, saluted him, and adored the name of God engraved in gold on his mitre. The account of this interview may be coloured and exaggerated: but it is not improbable that this conqueror wished to gain the good-will of the Jews at an easy price, and also to confirm the opinion Alexander delighted to spread, that he was himself marked out supernaturally as a favourite of the heavenly powers. In Egypt he was received as a deliverer, chiefly because he respected the national superstitions, which the Persians had treated with indignity.

It is not our purpose to trace Alexander's victorious career through the vast Asiatic continent beyond the River Indus. No European force has since ever made equal impression in that country. The great victories on the Granicus, and on the Issus, were won chiefly by Alexan-

¹ Antiq. B. xi. ch. 7, 8.

der's own personal prowess on the field of battle, and by the impetuosity and superior discipline with which the Greeks charged the royal Persian guard, it being understood, that if the Commander-in-Chief of an oriental army be killed or forced to fly, all is gained over the vast multitude of his followers. But the Macedonian hero shewed qualities much superior to valour or even conduct in the field : an intuitive sagacity in readily seizing advantages, and in judging the characters of men, a firmness of purpose quite equal to his ardour of spirit, great liberality, and a generosity toward the enemies who submitted, almost unexampled, and which might appear excessive, except that it succeeded in the result. This mixture of lenity with resolution gained him many friends in the Lesser Asia, and in Egypt, enabling him to lay securely the foundation of his new city, Alexandria, which he planned with wonderful foresight for commercial advantages, and also to recruit his armies. The supplies of men from Macedonia were scanty ; and the ¹ Peloponnesus prepared to shake off his yoke, but the confederates, under the command of the Lacedæmonians, were stopped by the jealousy of the Athenians, and the vigour

¹ Mitford's Hist. chap. i. sec. 1.

of Antipater, the governor of Macedon. The treasures of the rich countries Alexander overran were lavishly distributed among his friends and relations : it must also be recollected that the population of Lesser Asia ¹ were not indisposed to revolt from the Persian dominion, particularly since the successful invasion of Agesilaus, king of Sparta ; and their maritime cities were filled with Greek colonists. Since the defeat of the Persians and Phoenicians, the passage by sea remained open to the adherents of Alexander ; and we can readily suppose that adventurers flocked willingly to the banner of the first captain of the age, anticipating with confidence victory and spoil, and relying upon his bountiful temper, while they were assured he would undertake and carry through every enterprize that had a chance of success. His was no rash humour, yielding to difficulties ; but the resources of his mind seemed equal to all emergencies. He took fortified towns by military engines, transported his army over deep and rapid rivers, constructed a fleet upon the Indus, and defeated the hardy natives of the northern mountainous country, whom the Persian government itself

¹ Mitford's History of Greece, chap. xlviii. § 3.

had never subdued. It is true, that in order to fix his dominion in Persia, the Macedonian conqueror became Persian in his habits; but his power was fixed on a solid stable foundation; for after his decease (B.C. 323) the provinces of his vast empire were partitioned between his generals into five great divisions, and eventually, after many contests, into four kingdoms, according to Daniel's prophecy, (chap. viii.) The two largest of these were Syria, which fell to Seleucus, and Egypt, over which Ptolemy ruled: and such was the ascendancy of Europeans after Alexander's conquests, that these two families maintained possession of their thrones for many generations. No circumstance, indeed, affords more convincing proof of this king's superior character, than the capacity for government displayed by his successors, those commanders whom he had chosen, and who willingly and faithfully served under him.

Alexander had taken care to people the new city which he built, and called after his own name in Egypt, with inhabitants from different countries. Among other settlers many Jews resorted thither, and shared the favourable privileges¹ granted to

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. XII. c. 1.

the citizens. Ptolemy, surnamed Soter, the son of Lagus, and first of his line, took Jerusalem by stratagem on the Sabbath-day, (B.C. 320) and carried many Jews into Egypt; and that nation flourished and increased under his mild paternal government. This able monarch patronized literature, and laid the foundation of the celebrated library at Alexandria, which his successors¹ largely extended. Pisistratus had first set the example at Athens of these public institutions for collecting books; and no plan has contributed more to the improvement of science, and the progress of mental cultivation. The emigrant Jews gradually substituted for their native tongue the use of the Greek language, then prevalent along the shores of the Mediterranean. They were called Grecian or Hellenistic Jews; and for their use, and under the patronage of Ptolemy Philadelphus¹, son of Soter, was made, or, at least, begun the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, so celebrated under the title of the Septuagint Version. (B.C. 275.) Its

¹ Ammian. Marcell. Lib. 22. c. 16. A. Gellius. Lib. 6. c. 17.

² Prideaux Connect. Part II. B. 1. anno 277. At the Court of Ptolemy, flourished Demetrius Phalereus, Euclid, Callimachus, Theocritus.

authority is fixed by its being constantly quoted by our Saviour and his Apostles; but the story of the seventy interpreters shut up in the Island of Pharos is a fable. Dr. Prideaux has examined into the circumstances of this Version with his usual learning and exactness; and gives good reasons for his opinion, that it was not completed at once, but the Pentateuch having been first translated, versions of the prophets were afterwards added, when the reading of their works became common in the synagogues of Judea.

Thus, for a century after Alexander, the nation of the Jews was for the most part subject to the sovereigns of Egypt, the first three Ptolemies, Soter, Philadelphus, and Euergetes, who were all good men, deserving their surnames: particularly they bestowed on the Jewish settlers at Alexandria, advantages, as citizens, equal to those of the Macedonians themselves, with whom, being strangers, they formed common cause against the natives of the country. Under Euergetes a cause of disagreement arose from the imprudence and covetousness of the High Priest, Onias, a degenerate son of a most excellent father, Simon the Just¹. Onias had been

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. XII. c. 3, 4.

twice passed over in the election for the office of High Priest, on account of incapacity, and having (B.C. 226) omitted to pay the annual tribute, the Egyptian king sent to demand the arrears, threatening, if the money was not paid, to divide the country of the Jews among his soldiers. The storm was averted by the address and ability of Joseph, a young Jew of good family, and nephew to the High Priest. Having made presents to the king's messenger, and thus secured a favourable reception from Ptolemy in Egypt, he farther ingratiated himself with that monarch by offering to farm the taxes of Judea at double the usual rate. The calculation had been cunningly made in consequence of some unreserved disclosures of the old collectors in the presence of Joseph, who travelled in their company: by the help of the king's soldiers he collected the money proposed, and retained the office for twenty-two years, both under Euergetes and his unworthy son, Philopator.

We are now to consider the treatment which the Jews received from the powerful kings of Syria, until the year B.C. 200. Notwithstanding their being continually engaged in wars, three of Alexander's generals lived to the age of eighty, Ptolemy,

Seleucus, and Lysimachus. This latter ruled over the countries about the Hellespont, and was at last slain in a battle fought against Seleucus ; who in consequence of the victory, of surviving all Alexander's captains, and obtaining the most extensive dominion, seems to be fairly entitled to the surname which he assumed of Nicator, or the Conqueror. Seleucus built the city of Antioch, on the river Orontes, about twenty miles from the Mediterranean, half-way between Byzantium, or Constantinople, and Alexandria, being seven hundred miles from each. It was very much enlarged by his successors, and became the capital of the Syrian empire, to the north of mount Libanus. The country to the south, between Libanus and Anti-Libanus, including Damascus, is Cœle-Syria, or Hollow Syria, being a district of deep vallies between high mountains : Syria Palestina lies still more to the south, and nearer Egypt, to which kingdom we have seen it became tributary. But the Seleucidæ made many attempts to annex Judea to their vast empire by arms. These eventful struggles are shadowed out in a wonderful manner in the eleventh chapter. of the prophet Daniel ; together with the marriage contracted between Antiochus Theus, third king of Syria, and Berenice, daughter of

Ptolemy Philadelphus, and the fatal consequences of that union. The sacred writer prefigures also the transient success of Ptolemy Philopator, his vices and imprudence, and the insults and cruel injuries he inflicted on the Jews, both at Jerusalem and in Egypt, which alienated the hearts of that nation from his government. The statement of this matter is overcharged in that old, but spurious work, which we find annexed to the Septuagint version of the Bible, under the title of the third book of the Maccabees; but the substance of the account is rendered probable by the depraved and contemptible character which Polybius¹, who lived near the time, and was much in Egypt, ascribes to Philopator, and by the statement of Josephus² that the Jews, though attached to the Egyptian government, and notoriously faithful to their engagements, yet received Antiochus, king of Syria, into Jerusalem in a friendly manner. That distressed nation was, indeed, obliged to submit alternately to the strongest of these two great powers, between which it was situated, suffering from the defeats and victories of both, "as a ship in a storm is tossed by waves on both sides," says

¹ Hist. Polybi. Lib. 5 and 15.

² B. 12. c. 3, &c.

Josephus, who, himself, experienced similar troubles in his day. Yet the sovereigns of Syria, like those of Egypt, did much to conciliate the Jews, while they seized their territory. Seleucus Nicator, the founder of the Syrian Dynasty, established the Jews, with many privileges, in the cities which he built throughout his extensive dominions; and now Antiochus, who imitated Nicator, his ancestor, and had lately acquired great reputation by his victories in the east, and assumed the surname of Great, bestowed many favours on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, particularly in matters relating to their worship and temple (which Ptolemy Philopator had insulted and profaned), and transporting two thousand families of Jews¹, with their effects, out of Mesopotamia and Babylon, settled them in certain parts of Lesser Asia, (B. C. 200.) These little colonies served at that juncture as fortresses for the kings of Syria, and, in after times, as so many receptacles for the seed of the Gospel, planted by the first Jewish Apostles, and especially by St. Paul. Here again, we find the stream of the true religion setting westwards, contrary to probability, and by the compulsion of unexpected events.

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. XII. c. 3.

III. But other, and more powerful actors, begin to appear in the great scene of affairs, the Romans, who were destined to obtain the mastery wherever they came, and to gain for Europeans a predominance and superiority over the rest of the world, which they have ever since retained. That mighty republic was now (B.C. 200) in the height of its vigour, animated as one body, by a spirit of patriotism, and an ambition for conquest equally daring and resolute. Scipio had just defeated Annibal, before Carthage, and thus, by one blow, destroyed the power of that state, which was the great rival of Rome, and broke the fortunes of the consummate general, her most terrible enemy. The Romans had been so perpetually engaged in war, that from the time of Numa, a space of nearly five hundred years, the temple of Janus¹ had been shut but once, and then only for a few months, (B. C. 229.) War being thus the occupation of this enterprising people, carried on at first with the justifiable object of security, and afterwards of aggrandizement, they gladly seized every opportunity and pretext for interfering with the concerns of other nations, eagerly listening to applications for assistance from petty states

¹ Livy, lib. 1. c. 19.

and contending factions, and taking occasion, under the specious names of alliance and protection, to fix their armies permanently in foreign countries, the revenues and government of which thus fell under their management.

This system began, it may be said, in self-defence, and was naturally adopted by brave men in fair retaliation of the invasions of foreign powers, for instance, of the Gauls, and of the celebrated commander Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, who crossed the Adriatic to assist the Tarentines against Rome, and was the model on which Annibal formed himself. Gradually, the Romans, in their turn, became the aggressors and assailants. Although the Gauls took their city, and burnt it (B. C. 385), yet, under the conduct of Camillus¹, they saved the capitol, and forced these fierce invaders to retire, and continued, in subsequent contests, to gain ground upon their settlements, particularly towards the Adriatic, in the direction where Venice now stands. Nothing can shew more the energy of the Roman character, than the exertions they made against these irruptions; their fears were reasonable, and never

² Plutarch, Camillus.

deprived them of self-confidence, so that from this moment of their lowest depression, may be dated the commencement of that thriving prosperity, which, though interrupted by occasional reverses, continued in a steady course, until Rome attained universal sovereignty. They rebuilt their city in haste¹; and having strengthened their domestic administration, particularly by the admission of plebeians to offices of state, they subdued the small independent kingdoms, or tribes of Italy, on all sides of Rome, one after another; some they colonized, others, by a wise and liberal policy, they absorbed as allies, or incorporated as citizens, with different privileges, until all were reduced under one dominion. Leaders were never wanting in emergencies; a succession of great men sprung up, well qualified for counsel, and to command in action, whom the republic, jealous of its liberties, invested only with temporary powers. Frugality, and simplicity of manners, which a more refined age would consider rude and harsh, prevailed among the citizens, and an entire devotedness to the service of their country. Such were the people whom Pyrrhus unadvisedly undertook to conquer,

¹ Livy, lib. 9. c. 20. Polybius, lib. 2. c. 2.

and upon experience found them, according to his own liberal confession, the best soldiers in the world. Upon the first view of their encampments, this great military adventurer is reported to have said, "the order of these barbarians is not barbarous." After remaining six years in Italy and Sicily, Pyrrhus found it expedient to withdraw his forces and return to his own country. (B.C. 270.) Shortly after Ptolemy Philadelphus ¹ sent an embassy to Rome, and the senate in return sent four trusty ambassadors to Egypt. This is probably the first instance of friendly formal intercourse between one of the Eastern States, and the Romans, whom hitherto they had considered barbarians. Considering the versatile character and policy of Pyrrhus, and that he had married a sister of Ptolemy Philadelphus, it is not improbable that he himself originated this embassy, with a show of magnanimity towards opponents, which he affected after the manner of Alexander the Great, to whom he was nearly related, and whom he was thought more than any other man to resemble on the field of battle in look, vigour, and agility ².

After the departure of this warlike invader, the

¹ Livy Epitome. 14. Valer. Max. b. iv. c. 3.

² Plutarch, Pyrrhus.

Romans speedily subdued the nations to the south of Italy, the chief of whom were the Samnites and Tarentines: they took also the city Tarentum, a place of great luxury and opulence, the spoil of which is said to have first infected the Romans with the love of riches and pomp. Then was silver money coined at Rome for the first time. The conquerors were soon tempted to a new enterprise, and, following the example of Pyrrhus, crossed the narrow strait to interfere in the affairs of Sicily. There they came into collision with the Carthaginians; and thus the first Punic war began, upon a pretext of assisting allies, but really for the occupation of that fruitful island, and for the dominion of the sea. The Romans were ignorant of navigation; but such was their spirit¹, that having found a Carthaginian vessel accidentally stranded, they took it for a model, and soon fitted out a fleet, and, after a contest of twenty-three years, concluded the war very much to their advantage. (B.C. 240.) It was during the short interval of peace which followed, that the temple of Janus was shut. But the Roman republic had no wish for lasting peace; she seized the islands Sardinia and Corsica,

¹ Polybius, b. 1.

and made them, like Sicily, Roman provinces; she sent her forces in pursuit of the Gauls, and succeeded in taking possession of the extensive and fertile plains in the country called Gallia Cisalpina, about the river Po. She fitted out an expedition across the Adriatic for the first time (B.C. 227), to chastise the Illyrian pirates, and again (B.C. 218); and thus mingled herself with the affairs of Greece, and entered into a friendly correspondence with the cities of Athens, Corinth, and the Achæan, or Peloponnesian league. This prosperous career was checked for a time by the great exploits of Annibal. In addition to his talents in the field, and a genius for command, this extraordinary man possessed a sagacity, fertile in political expedients, which, whetted by implacable hostility, he employed upon the one chief object of his life, to weaken the Roman power; particularly by detaching old allies from that state, and raising up new enemies against it¹. Thus dazzled by the successes of the Carthaginian general, and tempted by his own rash ambition, Philip², king of Macedon, was

¹ Annibal excited the Sicilians against Rome; and, at the siege of Syracuse, by the Consul Marcellus, the celebrated Archimedes was killed, B. C. 212.

² Polybius, b. 7. c. 2.

induced, in evil hour for himself, to enter into a solemn treaty with Annibal against the Romans.

It is remarkable that of all the vast dominions of Alexander, that which suffered most after his death by family feuds, and intestine commotions, was his own hereditary kingdom of Macedon. During the reigns of five or six sovereigns in Syria and Egypt, successors of Seleucus and Ptolemy, we find not less than sixteen kings of Macedon. The family and children of Alexander were cut off by secret assassination, plotting one against another. Often the crown of Macedon seemed a prize destined to be seized by the strongest and the boldest. Upon the whole Antigonus obtained the firmest hold of the sceptre : he, like Ptolemy, was considered a natural son of Philip, father of Alexander the Great, and by his eminent abilities, and those of his son, Demetrius Poliorcetes, made himself so formidable, that the other sovereigns, with Seleucus and Ptolemy at their head, joined forces and defeated him in a great battle near the city Ipsus in Phrygia (B.C. 301), when Antigonus was killed. Still his son, and his son's sons, after struggling with many competitors in succession, among the rest with Pyrrhus, the renowned king of Epirus,

ultimately retained possession of the Macedonian throne. King Philip, with whom we are now concerned, was a lineal descendant from Antigonus, and seemed desirous of proving his claim of consanguinity with the first Philip, by warlike enterprizes and unbounded ambition: but he wanted the original grasp of mind, and steady determination of purpose, which distinguished his great ancestor. In reading Polybius¹ we catch some of the historian's honest zeal for the good of his country; we sympathize with the members of the Achæan League, that famous confederacy of the small Grecian states, founded in self-defence upon principles of equal justice and natural rights, and a confidence of mutual advantages. Such a political union in former times, the wisdom of Themistocles² projected, while Aristides, by his assiduity and integrity, established among the members of it a rate of taxation so justly proportioned to their different means, that all were satisfied, and the assessment had the title of "the happy lot of Greece:" but when the fear of the Persian invasion passed away, this amicable treaty was dissolved by the

¹ Polybius, c. 2. § 38. p. 175. Ed. Gronov.

² Plutarch, Themistocles and Aristides.

partial ambition and mutual jealousies of the communities composing it, which raged almost as high as the feuds between the Jews and the Samaritans, and occasioned ¹ intermarriages to be prohibited between the families of neighbouring states. The same system of policy revived in the Achæan League, under the illustrious support of Aratus and Philopœmen, “the last of the Greeks;” but the second Philip ² of Macedon was diverted from their noble and virtuous counsels, and gave himself up to low crafty intrigues, to sanguinary resentment, and to a course of unprincipled aggression, unrelieved by acts of bounty, generosity, and conciliation. The day of retribution soon came: even during the sixteen years that Annibal maintained an army in the heart of Italy, the Romans sent two considerable expeditions into Greece, and so effectually assisted their allies in that country ³ as to hinder Philip from co-operating with the Carthaginians, by finding him employment at home. Now after the decisive victory of Scipio over Annibal at Zama, the power of her rival being

¹ Mitford's Greece, ch. xxvi. § 2. Xenophon Hellen. lib. v. c. 2. p. 301.

² Polybius, lib. v.

³ Livy, b. 29.

broken, Rome, flushed with triumph, and having no enemy to fear in the West, turned her thoughts to conquests in Greece and Asia. The inhabitants of those countries about this period, says Polybius ¹, instead of having recourse, as formerly, to the Syrian or Egyptian monarchs, began to send ambassadors to Rome or Carthage, and to conclude that one of those two great western powers would be chief arbiter of the affairs of nations.

Besides the original quarrel of the Romans with the king of Macedon, there were not wanting other pretexts for declaring war against him. They received solicitations to interfere, as allies and protectors, from Attalus, king of Pergamus, and from the Alexandrian court. Ptolemy Philopator ² had shortened his life by voluptuous excesses, and alienated the affections of his subjects by pride, by a weak and cruel government, and by delivering himself up to incapable and infamous favourites. He thus left a tottering throne to his son, Ptolemy Epiphanes, a child of five years: and Philip ³ of Macedon, in conjunction with Antiochus the Great, formed the de-

¹ Polybius, b. v. ch. 9

² Ibid.

³ Polybius, b. 15, p. 985. Ed. Gronov.

sign of seizing Egypt, a project that appeared of easy accomplishment, on account of the internal troubles and dissensions, in order that, after setting aside the infant prince, they might divide the dominions of his inheritance between them. The Roman senate sent ambassadors to Alexandria, according to their usual manner, ostensibly to promote a friendly understanding between the states; but in reality as honourable spies, who might make an exact report of the condition of the government and the country, and thus enable the republic to gratify its ambition, under the gentle phrase of extending protection, according to circumstances. The Roman deputies, upon a former occasion¹, are stated to have looked without surprise or desire upon the pomp, splendour, and opulence of the Alexandrian court; to have declined luxurious feasts and rich presents, as things unacceptable and inconvenient to their simple habits. The members of the present embassy justified the discernment of those who selected them, and acted as faithful representatives of the republic, more desirous of real power than of show. Hitherto the western world had owed its chief advantages of civiliza-

¹ Livy, b. 14.

tion, merchandize, and knowledge, to the inhabitants of the East, and their colonies from Phœnicia, Egypt, and Greece ; but now the counsels of Providence began to be developed for reversing this order, and transferring that energy of character, which gives ascendancy, to those who were before inferior. For this natural change in the human constitution no secondary cause can be assigned : it must be resolved into the will of him who made and preserves the universe. But the transactions of that eventful period, recorded by the admirable historian, who was both an eye-witness, and a party greatly concerned, afford this lesson, always useful in civil and ecclesiastical affairs, that, as the advantage of the community is the only righteous foundation of governments, their safety consists in the favourable opinion of the people. The power of Alexander and of the Romans could not have prevailed among foreigners, as it did, unless they had been first dissatisfied with their domestic rulers. Men acquiesce in usurpation, accompanied with strength and justice, and prefer it as a refuge from odious tyranny or contemptible weakness in their own governments ; especially since a distant authority is often far less irksome and vexatious than one close at hand.

King Philip struggled for some few years ineffectually against the Roman armies, until he was obliged to submit to terms dictated by the senate; and in another generation the Macedonian empire was reduced to a tributary province of the republic. The warning example of Philip was lost upon Antiochus, surnamed the Great. This prince, still dreaming of recovering the ancient dominions of the first Seleucus, and being instigated by Annibal, who took refuge in his court, thought fit to measure his strength against the Romans. With this purpose in view he deemed it expedient, in the first place, to secure himself on the side of Egypt, by contracting ¹ his daughter in marriage with the young Epiphanes, and allotting for her dowry, the disputed provinces of Cœle-Syria and Palestine, with the insidious design marked by the prophet Daniel, (chap. xi. 7.) After concluding this measure of policy, Antiochus marched through Asia to Ephesus, and remained there some time in deliberation ². Annibal advised the invasion of Italy, but Antiochus could not appreciate the

¹ Josephus Antiq. b. xii. c. 4.

² Livy, B. xxxv. xxxvi. xxxvii. Plutarch in Catone. Polybius Excerpt. Legat. p. 1134. Ed. Gronov.

vigour and sincerity of that opinion : he became suspicious of the Carthaginian, and adopting the suggestion of men of inferior minds, rashly transported his forces into Greece. This was war by half-measures. Rome rejoiced at the signal for attack, and flew upon him, as an eagle pounces on his prey. Living in a kind of dotage with a young wife at Chalcis in Eubœa, the Syrian king seems to have been confounded by the alertness of his enemy. After a feeble attempt (very unlike that of Leonidas) to make a stand at the straits of Thermopyle, he made his escape in haste across the sea to Ephesus, leaving the towns he had fortified, garrisoned, and victualled, at the mercy of the Romans, and the passage of the Hellespont open. Annibal roused him to some exertion, worthy of his former fame ; but the effort was transient. The Roman fleet fell upon his ships off the Ionian coast, and gained a complete victory. A Roman army now for the first time passed into Asia, led by the Consul Lucius Scipio, brother to Africanus ; who with forces far inferior in number gave battle to Antiochus, near Magnesia. (B.C. 190.) The fortune of Rome prevailed (even Polybius, who is fond of tracing events to their causes, is obliged to ascribe some successes to fortune) ; Antiochus

was defeated with great loss, and compelled to an agreement for peace, by which he engaged to pay all the expenses of the war, and relinquish Asia Minor. One consolation remained, that he had been beaten by great men, by Cato the censor, and by the two Scipios, than whom no higher names appear in the Roman annals. It is remarkable that both Annibal and Scipio Africanus were near the spot, when the battle of Magnesia was fought, but neither of them took part in that engagement; Scipio (who was his brother's lieutenant) being prevented by sickness.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE HISTORY OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL.

THE stipulated payments to Rome pressed hard upon the Syrian empire. Antiochus, a mild and accomplished prince, but unequal to the emergency of the times, retired to his own country, broken alike in spirit and in power, and the manner of his death is differently reported: thus was the prophecy of Daniel accomplished concerning him, "he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land, and shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found¹." In the next verse, his son and successor, Seleucus Philopator, is described as "a raiser of taxes;" and, in fact, the most remarkable feature of his reign was the collection of the Roman tribute. The second book

¹ Daniel xi. 19.

of the Maccabees, (chap. 3,) contains a relation of the sacrilegious attempt of his treasurer, Heliodorus, upon the treasury of the temple at Jerusalem, and its prevention by a miraculous apparition. But this work, and that which is called the fourth book of the Maccabees in Josephus, are entitled to little credit. The first book of the Maccabees is of a far superior character; and upon the statements therein contained, we shall rely for an account of that storm of persecution which fell upon the Jews soon after the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes, a second son of Antiochus the Great, to the throne of Syria, (B. C. 175.) He is described by the prophet Daniel as "a vile," or "despicable person;" and accordingly his government of eleven years is at once one of the most contemptible and disastrous upon record. The events of these times correspond, indeed, so exactly with the sacred prophecies, that the infidel Porphyry, who lived in the third century after Christ, contended they were interpolations written after the facts had taken place; a suggestion contradicted by the testimony of Jewish writers, and the records of the Jewish Church, and which proves the difficulty he felt in overcoming their authority,

his prejudices, and his credulity. Polybius ¹ relates, that the surname of Antiochus was changed on account of his mad practices, by his subjects, from Epiphanes "the Illustrious," to Epimanes "the Madman." The Roman ² ambassador knew his man, when on the sands of Egypt he drew a circle round him with his staff, and peremptorily demanded an answer before he passed the mark: then this successor of Alexander was amazed, and said, "I will do all that Rome requires."

It appears there was about this time a great decay of religious principle among the Jews. A place of exercise (a Gymnasium) was built at Jerusalem, according to the custom of the heathen ³. Heathen ordinances were introduced; some leading Jews adopted Greek names; and the sons of the good high priest, Onias the Third, with shameless apostacy, bid one against another for the office, which they considered merely a step to secular power. A severe retribution awaited those who, at the expense of honour and conscience, courted a worthless prince. During the

¹ Athenæus, B. x. c. 52.

² Livy, B. 45. c. 11. Polyb. c. Excerpt. Legat. 92.

³ A Gymnasium. 1 Maccab. c. 1. Josephus, B. 12. c. 5.
² Maccab. c. 4.

minority of the Egyptian princes, who were nephews to Antiochus, those who governed Egypt laid claim to the countries of Coele-Syria and Palestine, which, it must be owned, had usually been under the sway of the Ptolemies. Antiochus was provoked in return to attempt the conquest of Egypt, and might have succeeded, but for the powerful interposition of Rome. Foiled in the main purpose of his expedition, he seized the pretext of some tumult which had broken out at Jerusalem, to vent his rage upon the inhabitants of that city, affecting to consider them as rebels. Upon this occasion, (B. C. 170,) he "made a great massacre," and what was, perhaps, his main object, pillaged the temple and the treasury. Two years afterwards, the king sent his "chief collector of tribute," who spoiled the cities of Judea, with circumstances of great cruelty. Then ensued a systematic persecution of the Jews on account of their religion. The sanctuary at Jerusalem was defiled and polluted with swine's flesh and other abominations, the Sabbaths were profaned, the people were forbidden to circumcise their children, and mothers who complied with this rite were inhumanly put to death. The books of the law, the copies, namely, of the holy Scriptures, were

destroyed and burnt ; and it was the king's command, that whosoever should be found to have them in possession, or to consent to them, should be put to death. Finally, an idol altar was erected on the altar of God. Epiphanes, or rather Epimanes, in his impious extravagance, forgot that a king's best exchequer is the prosperity of his subjects, and his best security their good-will. Probably, the heathens generally viewed the Jews with contempt and disgust, partly on account of their apostacy, and partly on account of what must have appeared their absurd obstinacy about indifferent matters. Calamity is Divine chastisement ; and by the over-ruling will of God, these repeated atrocities, instead of producing the intended effect of extinguishing the Jewish religion, occasioned its revival, and rekindled afresh the ancient warlike spirit of the nation. Mattathias, a priest of the noble family of the Asmoneans, had quitted Jerusalem, with his five sons, and sought refuge from the persecution in Modin, a small town near Joppa, on the sea-coast. Thither came the king's commissioners, and, by persuasion and bribes, endeavoured to induce Mattathias, as the chief person in the place, to be the first to comply with the king's ordinance, and set an example of

sacrificing on the heathen altar erected. But Mattathias openly and loudly said, " Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers : yet will I, and my sons, and brethren, walk in the covenant of our fathers. We will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand or on the left ¹." And when one of the Jews came to sacrifice on the altar, Mattathias, with the zeal of a Phineas, ran and slew him ; and at the same time killed the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, and pulled down the altar. He then fled, with his sons, to the mountains. Many Jews, moved by the example and exhortations of Mattathias, took refuge from the royal persecution in the wilderness ; but they were pursued by the king's forces, and put to death without resistance, it being the Sabbath-day, men, women, and children, to the number of a thousand persons. Hereupon Mattathias, and his friends, resolved to fight on the Sabbath-day, and being joined by a company of the Assideans, or Chasidim (the pious), men of a peculiar strictness in observing the Law and the Traditions, and

¹ 1 Maccabees ii. 19.

very zealous for the honour of the temple, they waged successful war against king Antiochus, destroying the heathen idolatrous altars, and re-establishing the law of God and the service of the Synagogue.

Mattathias was aged, and fatigue probably hastened his death, but he found worthy successors in his sons; and on his death-bed appointed Judas to be captain of the party, and Simon to be their counsellor (B. C. 166). Judas assumed the surname Maccabeus, it is supposed, from the motto on his standard, formed of the initial letters of the Hebrew sentence, signifying, “who is like unto thee, among the gods, O Jehovah¹?” He carried on this war in defence of religion, with great valour, and, notwithstanding the inferiority of numbers, gained three signal victories over the king’s forces in the course of a year after his father’s death. The Syrians were obliged to retire back to Antioch; and the Jewish chief, with his assembled host, having entered Jerusalem more in sorrow than in triumph, cleansed and repaired the sanctuary, built a new altar instead of that which had been profaned, and kept a

¹ Exodus xv. 11.

solemn festival of eight days, for the purpose of dedicating it to the worship of the true God ¹.

Meanwhile, Antiochus was enraged at the defeats sustained by his armies from a people whom he despised, and threatened and prepared vengeance. Being, like other persons of the same stamp, as profuse as he was rapacious, he had exhausted his treasury by lavish gifts to unworthy favourites, by extravagant shews, and fruitless wars; and in order to replenish it, in the course of an expedition into Persia, he made an attempt to plunder the rich temple of Diana, at Elymais, a town not far from the Persian Gulf. He was repulsed by the inhabitants, and died soon after, miserably, in torments of mind and body; "being struck with madness," as some say, relates Polybius ², "on account of this sacrilegious attempt." But Josephus justly observes, the historian might have assigned a fitter cause of the Divine judgments, in the sacrilege this king had not only designed, but actually committed, at Jerusalem.

Epiphanes left his crown to his son, Eupator, a child. (B.C. 164.) But there started up a competitor in the person of Demetrius ³, son of

¹ 1 Maccab. c. 3, 4. Josephus, B. XII. c. 7—9.

² De Virtut. and Vitiis. Ex. lib. 31. Josephus, B. 12. c. 9.

³ Polybius, Legat. 107.

king Seleucus Philopator, the elder brother of Epiphanes. After the defeat of Antiochus the Great, at Magnesia, it had been the Roman policy to take the young princes of the Eastern countries to Rome, as hostages and pupils, in order that they might be brought up there under the influence of leading men, in Roman habits, and with a view of strengthening by this close connection the authority of the great republic, and opening new pretexts for her overpowering interference in foreign affairs. Antiochus Epiphanes had himself been a hostage of this kind, and Demetrius, now in his twenty-fourth year, had resided half his life-time at Rome, nominally a client under the protection and honourable patronage of the republic, but in reality a captive. Notwithstanding this tie, and the repeated declarations made by the young prince of his devoted attachment to Rome, as "his country and his nurse," the senate took part with Eupator; "considering, I suppose¹," (says Polybius very shrewdly) "that the younger king would be more easily moulded to their purposes." About the same time Ptolemy Philometor as a sup-

¹ Polyb. *Excerptæ Legationes*, 107. Ed. Gronov. v. 2. p. 1300.

pliant to Rome in miserable condition, having been driven out of his kingdom by his younger brother Ptolemy, surnamed Physcon or the Fat. Thus the senate had, at their disposal, these two great kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, and their dynasties, at the same time ; and profited sagaciously (according to the historian's¹ remark) by the errors of foolish persons, whom they appeared to benefit and oblige, at the moment they were most providing for the interests of the republic, and a full scope for their own power and ambition. Ambassadors were accordingly sent to Eupator, with a commission to recognize his title to the throne, and, at the same time, to reduce the number of his ships and elephants to the scale allowed by the original treaty with Antiochus the Great. This measure was resented by the Syrians, notwithstanding their depressed condition, and ill-blood arose, which caused the assassination of Octavius, one of the Roman ambassadors, and a lineal ancestor of that Octavius Cæsar, who, in after times, under the name of Augustus, became Emperor of Rome.

This was thought a favourable opportunity for a second application to the senate from Deme-

¹ Polybius Legat. 113, 114.

trius. It proved, as before, useless ; and then, by the advice of Polybius ¹, who raised his spirit, and exhorted him “ to place his hopes in himself,” the prince made his escape from Rome. Sailing secretly, and with great expedition to Syria, he gave out that his pretensions were supported by the Roman senate, and, under that impression, prevailed to establish his authority, and speedily seized and put to death Eupator, and his chief adviser and captain, Lysias. (B.C. 162.)

This Lysias had been the great opponent of Judas Maccabeus in battle, and had lately reduced the Jewish leader and his faithful followers at Jerusalem to great straits. But their affairs were in no better condition under Demetrius. Lysias performed one good deed in putting to death the apostate High Priest of the Jews, Menelaus, who had obtained the office by bribery, and used it to promote his own temporal interest, and was the secret author and instigator of those religious wars and persecutions. But, unhappily, Alcimus, the successor appointed to Menelaus, was an apostate also of equally unprincipled character ; and being at Antioch, at the time of

¹ Polyb. Legat. 114.

the accession of Demetrius, he put himself at the head of "the wicked and ungodly men of Israel¹," apostates like himself, and gained the ear of the new monarch so as to exasperate him against the Maccabees.

At the instigation of this pretender to the High Priesthood, king Demetrius sent two expeditions against the righteous Jews, the first under Bacchides, and the second under Nicanor, who was slain in battle. But notwithstanding this transient success, Judas Maccabeus finding himself hard pressed by the numerous armies of the Syrian king, and by the intrigues of Alcimus, who, at one time, gained over the Assideans, formed the resolution of proposing a league with the Romans, (B.C. 161) which was probably the most prudent measure that could be taken in his peculiar difficulties. In the eighth chapter of the first book of Maccabees is given a clear and plain account of this transaction; beginning with the impression made on the Jewish leader by the reports of the very great power and extensive dominion of these republicans, and their fidelity to their engagements. The Romans received the overture of alliance very favourably, and entered

¹ 1 Macc. c. 7. Josephus, b. xii. c. 9, 10.

into a treaty of mutual friendship with the Jews; a copy of which, inscribed on tables of brass, the senate sent to Jerusalem: but Judas lived not to receive it. While this transaction was pending, Demetrius, to revenge the death of Nicanor, sent Bacchides and Alcimus at the head of a large army into Judea. The forces of Judas Maccabeus were frightened, and deserted him, so that he was left with only eight hundred men to contend against the Syrian host. With this handful of soldiers Judas defeated one wing of the enemy; but he was at length overpowered by numbers, and died as he had lived, in a manner becoming a religious hero. His brothers, Jonathan and Simon, still faithfully maintained the cause of religion: and were enabled to do so with more success in consequence of the death of Alcimus. Another fortunate occurrence for the Jews was the enterprize of Alexander Balas¹, a Rhodian youth of mean condition, whom the enemies of Demetrius suborned to lay claim to the crown, under pretence of being son to Antiochus Epiphanes. Demetrius² was indeed his own worst

¹ Polyb. Legat. 138. 140. 1 Macc. x. Josephus. Antiq. b. xiii. c. 2. Livy. Epit. b. lii.

² Athenæus, b. 10.

enemy, shutting himself up in a fortified castle near Antioch, to lead a life of sloth and continual drunkenness. Both Demetrius and Balas¹ courted the friendship of Jonathan and his party with large offers, a proof that the Maccabees possessed the real power of the country. But the character of Demetrius was not trustworthy ; and Jonathan ultimately took part with Balas, who constituted him high priest, (B. C. 153.)

It has been argued that Jonathan would not have accepted this office from an impostor. The expressions of Polybius are vague, and it must be recollected also, that he was a personal friend of Demetrius. The only other contemporary authority, the writer of the first book of Maccabees, considers Balas as the son of king Epiphanes. Two kings of Asia Minor acknowledged him, as did Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt, who also gave him his daughter in marriage. The Romans afforded their powerful aid to Alexander Balas ; and this circumstance must have had great weight with the Jews. Mr. Whiston's conjecture, perhaps, points at the truth, that this young aspirant was really the son

¹ 1 Macc. x. Josephus, B. 13. c. 1.

of Epiphanes, but by a mother of low family and unmarried. Moreover, Jonathan might, with justice and by right, accept the office of high priest, since his family were of the course of Joarib ¹, which was the first class ² of the sons of Aaron; especially as he had the consent of his nation, and there was no competitor. The office was indeed hereditary, and had continued since the captivity in the descendants of Jozadac, which was therefore called the Pontifical family ³. Onias, the last good high priest of that stock, was supplanted, as we have seen, and ultimately murdered, by the wicked plots of his apostate brothers, Jason and Menelaus. After Menelaus, Alcimus, another apostate, was appointed, and is considered an interloper, though of the family of Aaron. Upon the appointment of Alcimus, Onias, son of Onias, who expected, with reason, to succeed his father ⁴, withdrew, in disgust, into Egypt; and having ingratiated himself with Ptolemy Philometor, and his queen, Cleopatra, made himself a way, by his abilities, to the highest offices in the army and state of that

¹ 1 Macc. ii. 1.

² 1 Chron. xxiv. 7.

³ Joseph. Antiq. B. 15. c. 3.

⁴ Joseph. Antiq. B. 12. c. 15; and B. 20. c. 8.; and Contra Apionem. B. 2. § 5.

country. From these sovereigns, Onias obtained permission to build a temple to Almighty God, after the model of that at Jerusalem, in a district near Memphis, of which he obtained the government, and founded there a city, called after his own name, Onion. He professed¹, that the prophecies of Isaiah, (chap. xix. ver. 18, 19,) incited him to this undertaking: and it must be allowed, that combined with the circumstances of the times, they formed some authority for the work; though Josephus² states, that Onias was influenced by a motive of revenge and contention against the Jews at Jerusalem. However this may be, this Egyptian temple was erected upon a somewhat smaller scale than its prototype, and sacrifices and worship were offered therein to God, after the manner of Jerusalem, until the time of the emperor Vespasian, by whose command it was destroyed, together with the city Onion, not long after the destruction of the mother-temple. These prophecies refer, ulti-

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 18. c. 3.

² Wars of the Jews, B. 7. c. 10.—The district and city Onion appear to be on the same spot as the ancient On, or Heliopolis, just above the Delta to the east, and not far from the land of Goshen and the present Cairo.—Genesis xii. 45, Strabo, B. 17. Pococke, B. 1. c. 3. Lowth on Isaiah. c. 19.

mately, to the diffusion of the Gospel; and we have before had occasion to remark, that the Jewish establishments in different countries formed a preparation for Christianity.

Another provision to the same effect, grew, by Divine blessing, out of those very measures which were intended to abolish the true religion. The five books of Moses having been divided into sections, one of these was read every Sabbath-day in regular order throughout the year, in the Jewish Synagogues "of old time¹," as we may reasonably conclude from the time of Ezra. But in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes² the copies of the law were destroyed wherever they could be found, or rendered useless to the Jews by being profaned with pictures of heathen deities. The sacred writings of the prophets were not included in the order for destruction, nor were they so polluted; and, in consequence, they were read in Divine service by those who could no longer obtain the Pentateuch. The public reading of the prophets having been thus, by necessity, once introduced into the Synagogues, it continued ever after; thus it is mentioned in the

¹ Acts xv. 21.

² 1 Macc. c. 2, 3.

18th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul stood up to preach in the Synagogue at Antioch, in Pisidia, “after the reading of the law and the prophets,” and he tells his hearers that “the prophets were read every Sabbath-day at Jerusalem;” and our blessed Lord read a memorable portion of the prophet Isaiah at his own city Nazareth, in the Synagogue, on the Sabbath-day¹. The attention of the people was thus continually excited to the meaning of the prophetic Scriptures, and particularly to the approaching fulfilment of those parts of them which pointed to the Messiah.

It is to be observed, that during the hot persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Samaritans renounced all kindred with the Jews, and professed to be a colony of Sidonians, though, at the same time, confessing, with some inconsistency, an ancient custom of observing the Sabbath. They even offered to dedicate their temple on mount Gerizim to Jupiter Hellenius, which offer the king accepted. This, at least, is the account of Josephus²; and he states that a controversy³

¹ Acts xiii. 15. 27. St. Luke iv. 17, 18.—See Dr. Prideaux’s learned remarks. Connection. Part I. B. 5. p. 335. and Part II. B. 3. p. 183.

² Antiq. B. 12. c. 5.

³ Antiq. B. 13. 3.

was carried on between the Jews and Samaritans at Alexandria, in the presence of king Ptolemy Philometor, with regard to the comparative holiness of the two temples at Jerusalem and mount Gerizim; the result of which was, that the Samaritan advocates, being adjudged to have the worst of the argument, were, by order of the king, put to death: a mode of settling controversies far more efficient than just. These passages in Josephus, whether exaggerations of the truth or not, prove the bitter animosity always kept up between the Jews and the Samaritans.

To return to the thread of history, Demetrius was slain in battle against Alexander Balas¹, (B.C. 150.) but his son, Demetrius (who afterwards took the name of Nicator) succeeded to his father's claims, and with better fortune. Ptolemy Philometor having marched with a large army into Judea, ostensibly for the support of his son-in-law, Balas, these² two princes became mutually jealous of each other's designs, and so much ill-will arose between them, that Ptolemy

¹ 1 Macc. x. 48.

² Ibid. xi. 5, 6. Josephus, B. 13. c. 14.

marched to Antioch, and there entered into league with young Demetrius. An engagement took place, in which Balas being defeated fled into Arabia, and was there put to death, and Ptolemy was so badly wounded that he also died in a few days. (B.C. 146.) Jonathan, the High Priest of the Jews, as has been already stated, took part with king Balas, and did him good service in these wars: but after the death of Balas, he was induced to turn the powerful assistance of the Jews in favour of Demetrius Nicator. Upon ¹the occasion of an insurrection at Antioch, Jonathan sent an army of three thousand men to the king's assistance, who, being joined by the Jews of the city, defeated the rebellious citizens with very great slaughter. But Demetrius, like his father, lost the support of his friends by his vices, dissimulation, and incapacity. The old manœuvres were resorted to by those who saw his weakness and wished to take advantage of it. Tryphon, one of the generals of Alexander Balas, brought forward his young son, Antiochus, as claimant to the throne, which, it seems, he hoped eventually to secure for himself. Jonathan, disgusted with Demetrius, went over

¹ 1 Macc. xi. 47

to the party of his rival; but was soon after treacherously put to death by Tryphon, who probably found him too honest for his own unprincipled projects. It was not the will of Providence that the noble race of the Maccabees should be so extinguished. Simon, the brother of Jonathan, was appointed in his stead High Priest and leader of the Jews; and such was the influence of his character, that king¹ Demetrius not only confirmed the appointment, but remitted also the crown-tax and all other tribute, so that the nation became once again independent, and no longer dated their instruments and contracts from the accession of the Seleucidæ, but began a new æra from the government of Simon². (B.C. 143.) The sovereignty of Judea was afterwards solemnly confirmed to him and his posterity in a general assembly of the Priests and Elders, and people at Jerusalem; and the conduct of this great man fully justified the confidence reposed in his ability and integrity. The praise of his dying father, Mattathias, appears prophetic,—“Simon is a man of counsel; give ear unto him alway, he shall be a father unto you³.” The first

¹ 1 Macc. xiii. 40.

² Ibid. xiv. 26.

³ Ibid. ii. 65.

acts of his government were to erect sepulchres to his father and brethren at Modin, and to fortify the strong holds of Judea ; and he proceeded to expel the heathen from the places which they occupied, and particularly from the fortress or tower which Antiochus Epiphanes had built in the middle of Jerusalem to overawe the citizens, and which, with its garrison had, from that time, been a thorn in the sides of the Maccabees. In a word "the land was quiet all the days of Simon ; for he sought the good of his nation in such wise as that evermore his authority and honour pleased them well ¹." The whole record is well worthy of attention, as describing the character of a wise, benevolent, and resolute sovereign, and the blessings of his government. The league with the Romans, which Judas Maccabeus had first entered into twenty years before, and which had been renewed by Jonathan, was again confirmed by Simon, who sent to Rome a present of a shield of gold weighing a thousand minæ ², which Dr. Prideaux values at fifty thousand pounds sterling. Indeed, the alliance with Rome may be considered the key of the Jewish policy at this period, when Judea was perpetually

¹ 1 Macc. xiv. 4.

² Ibid. 24.

overrun by the armies of the competitors for the thrones of Egypt and Syria, and was only prevented, under God, by the virtues of the Maccean brethren, from being torn to pieces by domestic factions. They were raised up as instruments to stop the progress of worldly-minded apostacy, which must have brought ruin and destruction on the nation. Such was the temptation held out in those troublesome times to unprincipled ambition, that even Simon, after a reign of eight years, was ¹ murdered by his own son-in-law, one Ptolemy, (B.C. 135.) who hoped by the aid of the king of Syria, to usurp the government of Judea. The wretch was disappointed in his atrocious design ; and John, surnamed Hyrcanus, succeeded his father Simon, as High Priest and Prince of the Jews, and ruled them thirty years.

The plan we have proposed, is to trace briefly an outline of the series of events in history, which affected the state of the Jews, and of the world, at the time of the introduction of Christianity. And we have been led to do this at more length, on account of the great value which

¹ Macc. xvi. 16. Josephus Antiq. B. XIII. c. 7.

attaches to the writings of two contemporaries, Polybius, and the author of the first book of Maccabees. We must now, with regret, take leave of these authorities ; and it may not be improper to close our reference to Polybius, with his observations upon the religion of the Romans, whose institutions and character he admired and approved, in spite of his love for his native Greece ¹. “ Among all the useful institutions that demonstrate the superior excellence of the Roman government, the most considerable, perhaps, is the opinion which the people are taught to hold concerning the gods ; and that which among other men is a subject of disgrace, appears, in my judgment, to be the very thing by which this republic is chiefly sustained. I mean superstition : which is impressed with all its terrors ; and influences both the private actions of the citizens, and the public administration also of the state, in a degree that can scarcely be exceeded. The ancients acted not absurdly, nor without good reason, when they inculcated the notions concerning the gods, and the belief of infernal punishments ; but much more those of the present age, are to be charged with rashness

¹ Hampden's Polybius, B. VI. Ex. 3. p. 98. Ed. Gronov. B. VI. s. 54. p. 692.

and absurdity, in endeavouring to extirpate these opinions. For, not to mention other effects which flow from such an institution, if among the Greeks, for example, a single talent only be entrusted to those who have the management of any of the public money ; though they give ten written acknowledgments, with as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, they are unable to discharge the trust reposed in them with integrity. But the Romans, on the other hand, who, in the course of their magistracies, and in embassies, disburse the greatest sums, are prevailed on, by the single obligation of an oath, to perform their duty honestly. And as, in other states, a man is rarely to be found, whose hands are pure from public robbery and peculation ; so among the Romans it is no less rare to detect one tainted with this crime." *Tantum religio potuit suadere bonorum.* And to the vague invectives of Epicureans against religion, we may safely oppose this testimony of Polybius, a disinterested and impartial witness, a man of observation and experience, practised in great affairs, civil and military, the friend of " the virtuous" Scipio ¹, (Africanus the younger) and of the mild and " wise" Lælius.

¹ Horace Sat. B. 2. § 1.

Polybius went with Scipio on his expedition, in the third Punic war, which lasted three years; and by his counsels contributed to its successful termination, and the destruction of ¹ Carthage. (B.C. 146.) In the same year, the Consul Mummius destroyed Corinth: and we cannot be surprised that the Roman arms, thus triumphant, swayed the eastern countries, Egypt, Syria, and Judea. The proud and high-minded republicans made little account of the tributary sovereigns. A Roman lady, a widow, declined, without hesitation, an offer of marriage from the Egyptian king, Ptolemy Physcon ²: indeed that lady was the daughter of Scipio Africanus the elder, and still better known as the mother of the Gracchi, Cornelia, a model of matronly excellence. The Senate frequently sent commissioners into the provinces and dominions of their Allies, with a sort of supreme power: and in the year before the death of Simon, (B.C. 136) three ambassadors, or commissioners, came to Alexandria, in order to inspect the state of affairs in Egypt,

¹ Scipio felt, it is said, a presentiment of the fall of Rome, in the ruin of her rival, repeating at the time the beautiful passage,

Εσσεται ημαρ οτ' αν ποτ' ολωλη Ιλιος ιρη.

ILLIAD VI. 450.

² Plutarch's Life of Tiberius Gracchus.

Syria, Asia, and Greece, and make a report to the Senate¹. One of them was Scipio Africanus, the younger, then the greatest man of Rome, who set an example of great temperance² and moderation in his habits of life. But yet the love of luxury and opulence was imperceptibly increasing among the Romans, together with a taste for literature and the fine arts. The beginning of the decline of the empire has been dated from the introduction of Asiatic luxury ; yet to use refinement and delicacy in the gratification of the senses, is an improvement in the condition of mankind ; and it would be difficult to prove it has necessarily a tendency to enervate the mind and corrupt the principles. It must also be recollected, that the most fatal of luxuries is sloth, indolence of body and apathy of mind, oppressed by which, men cannot be roused to exertion by generous feelings and a sense of duty. The change wrought on Roman manners, about this period, was a change for the better ; for they had been gross, rude, and half-barbarous. Literature had been checked and discouraged at Rome ; and a few years before, a law was enacted for removing philosophers and rhetoricians out

¹ Diodorus Siculus, Legat. 32.

² Athenæus, B. 6. p. 273.

of the city, as a set of men worse than useless. The Consul Mummius is immortalized by that ignorant order, which he is said, after the capture of Corinth, to have issued to those who conveyed the exquisite pieces of painting and statuary to Rome¹, "If any are injured or lost, you shall replace them;" as if he had been bargaining for the carriage of a common bale of goods. The Scipios had spirits of a finer quality; the younger Scipio loved learning and the society of learned men, the poets Ennius and Lucilius, the historian Polybius, and the philosopher Panætius.

The obvious defect of the Roman commonwealth was the absence of a middle class, between the senators and the people, of numbers, property, and influence sufficient to form public opinion. Such a body might have interposed seasonably to settle, on an equitable and useful basis, the enterprize of the Gracchi; (B.C. 132) who now appear more seditious than patriotic, because they attempted to govern by throwing the power of the state into the hands of the people at large, the multitude; who are only formidable from force of numbers, and are incapable of deliberation, and of acting systematically long

¹ Paterculus 1. c. 13. Cicero de Off. 1. 25.

in concert together. That the attempt of the Gracchi was ill-advised and rash, (all imputation of their motives being set aside) is evident from the fact, that after their time the popular cause never made head again ; and thenceforward all struggles in the state were between different parties of individual senators and nobles, who aspired ambitiously to supreme power.

The Pontificate of John Hyrcanus began unfavourably¹ : for Antiochus Sidetes, or the hunter, then reigning in Syria, besieged Jerusalem, probably at the instigation of Ptolemy, the murderer of Simon, and reduced the citizens to such straits, that it seems he would have “utterly destroyed” the nation, had not Providence endowed the high priest with courage and discretion, fitted to the emergency. He pacified the invader by presents, and by entering into a treaty with him ; in pursuance of which, Hyrcanus joined the Syrian expedition against the Parthians, who now began to be a formidable power, and detained a prisoner in their country, king Demetrius Soter, the brother of Sidetes. Hyrcanus afterwards subdued the Idumæans, and made a

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. 13. c. 9.

league of friendship with Rome. He also invaded Samaria, and took the capital after a year's siege, and entirely demolished it. He inherited the talents and vigour of the Maccabean race, with a greater measure of prosperity¹. A very remarkable part of his history is, that he left the sect of the Pharisees, in which he had been educated : if he went over to the Sadducees, and adopted their opinions, we must believe, with Dean Prideaux, that they consisted at that time in a rejection of the traditions, which the Pharisees added to the written law, and made of equal authority with it. We cannot suppose this good high priest would have embraced doctrines against the resurrection and a future state. During the reign of Hyrcanus, Jesus², the son of Sirach, a Jew of Jerusalem, coming into Egypt, and settling there, translated out of Hebrew into Greek, for the use of the Hellenistical Jews, the book of Jesus, his grandfather; which is placed among the Apocryphal Scriptures in our English Bibles, by the name of Ecclesiasticus. The ancients called it *πανάρετον*, "the treasure of all virtue." It may truly be esteemed Divine philosophy, a persuasive recom-

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. 13. c. 9.

² Prideaux Connect. Part II. B. 5. p. 303.

mendation to the practice of moral virtue in the hope of pleasing God, as man's best wisdom, his surest means of happiness. The spirit of piety and devotion in this composition reminds us of the inspired writings of Job, David, and Solomon: it is, throughout, a representation of the insufficiency of temporal possessions, of human weakness, of God's mercy and faithfulness; and thus forms a preparation for the Christian Scriptures. Our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount is an admirable completion of the doctrines of "the Preacher," delivered by our Lord with clearness and certainty, and with a tone of authority beyond man.

Hyrchanus was succeeded by his eldest son, Aristobulus, (B.C. 107,) who first of his family assumed the title of king; a proof that Judea was now quite independent of the Syrian crown. The sceptre of the Seleucidæ had fallen into incapable hands; and the dynasty of that family, worn out by a gradual political decline, was at length extinguished, and their power transferred to the kings of Armenia and the Parthians.

The Egyptian race of the Ptolemies dragged on a longer existence without glory to themselves, or advantage to their subjects. Ptolemy Physcon

ded, (B.C. 117) after reigning twenty-nine years, a monster of vice and cruelty, if we will believe the Roman historians. According to the odious custom of his country, he married¹ his sister Cleopatra, relict of his brother, and killed her son in her arms on the day of the nuptials: and this is not the worst which is related of him. Notwithstanding the bloody ferocity of the orientals in their struggles for power, such unnatural and inhuman actions are scarcely credible upon the bare relation of writers, who lived a century after they are said to have happened, natives of a foreign, distant, and hostile country; and who, in stories of this kind, seem to have pandered to that appetite for slander and detraction, which is unhappily so common, as to appear instinctive in the human race. Similar horrors are related of Mithridates, the great king of Pontus. He ascended his father's throne at the early age of eleven or twelve years, (B.C. 124,) and waged war against the Romans for thirty years, with a force more formidable than that of Pyrrhus or Annibal, except that Italy was not invaded. Mithridates gradually extended his dominions from the Euxine to the Caspian Sea,

¹ Justin. B. 38. c. 8. Valerius Maximus, B. 9. c. 2.

and farther eastward in Parthia ; and has left a character for enterprize and capacity far superior to the sovereigns his contemporaries.

Aristobulus ¹ enjoyed his regal title but one year. In order to secure it to himself by excluding competition, he put to death, after the Eastern fashion, his mother, and one of his brethren ; and died afterwards of sickness aggravated by remorse. Alexander Jannæus, the eldest surviving brother of Aristobulus, succeeded to the throne of Judea, (B.C. 105,) and reigned twenty-seven years. He made conquests in Syria and Idumæa, and compelled the inhabitants to be circumcised and to become Jews. His whole reign was embittered by the seditions of the factious Pharisees, whose enmity began in his father's time : on ² one occasion of public sacrifice, when he stood upon the altar, they excited the multitude to pelt him with citrons. Jannæus, following the example of neighbouring states, supported his weak government by merciless measures ; and at one time had eight hundred Jews of his enemies crucified

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. 13. c. 11.

² Ibid. c. 13, 14.

at Jerusalem with circumstances of barbarous cruelty. Upon his death-bed (B.C. 78,) he gave the politic advice to his queen Alexandra to court the Pharisees : which she did with such effect as to maintain herself in the government for nine years, under the name of regent¹. The Pharisees possessed the real authority, and were Lords of the nation ; and introduced again those practices, according to the traditions of their forefathers, by abrogating which Hyrcanus had excited their hostility. This sagacious princess died in the seventy-third year of her age, (B.C. 69,) leaving a state and family full of troubles, public and private.

Alexandra had appointed her eldest son Hyrcanus High Priest, because he was of a soft and easy temper, easily managed. Her younger son, Aristobulus, partaking of his mother's spirit, boldly laid claim to the throne upon her death ; and came to an amicable agreement with Hyrcanus, who willingly retired to private life². But Antipas, an Idumæan proselyte of noble family, who changed his name by a Greek termination to Antipater, gained great influence over Hyrca-

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 13. c. 16.

² Ibid. B. 14. c. 1.

nus; and for his own ambitious purposes prevailed on him to contend for the kingdom against Aristobulus. Before this civil war was kindled in Judea, that unhappy country had been threatened with invasion by Tigranes, king of Armenia and Syria, who advanced with a large army as far as Ptolemais. The regent Alexandra appeased him with presents: and this powerful monarch was also obliged to march back his forces for the defence of his own dominions, and of his father-in-law, the great Mithridates, against the victorious Romans, who, under Lucullus, had possessed themselves of Pontus. This great general besieged the capital of Armenia, Tigranocerta, situated on the Tigris, in the hope of bringing on an engagement. The plan succeeded; for Tigranes, with barbarian pride, hastened to revenge the affront, expecting to destroy the invaders at a blow; contrary to the wily advice of Mithridates, who recommended to let the Romans exhaust themselves by long marches in a hostile country, stripped of provisions. Lucullus¹ gained a complete victory over the vast Armenian army, twenty times as numerous as his own, and pursued the fugitives

¹ Plutarch's *Life of Lucullus*.

with great slaughter. The capital soon surrendered; and the plunder obtained in this and other Asiatic cities was of immense value; so that the war not only maintained itself, but enriched the officers, the soldiers, and Rome. But victory and spoil had corrupted the manners of the republic; insensibly that change had begun in its constitution, allotted to all human affairs, which tended to ruin at the time of its greatest prosperity; as an insidious and fatal disease sometimes lurks under appearances of florid health. Although the nobles had gotten the better of the plebeians in the affair of the Gracchi, yet the authority of the senate received a shock, of which ambitious men availed themselves by courting popular favour in opposition to it. Cool and reflecting minds must have perceived that if the Gracchi were seditious, the Patricians were not free from the imputation of tyranny and rapacity. The Roman armies were composed not of mercenary troops, but of citizens; and this very circumstance, which had long preserved the republic, and was the chief cause of its military superiority, by identifying the army with the people, was now turned against the senate, and suggested to aspiring demagogues

the thought of gaining over the soldiers, in order by their means to govern the state.

Caius Marius¹, a man of obscure birth, first distinguished himself in Africa under Scipio Africanus the younger. His talents as a general were of a high order, and enabled him to perform the most opportune and important services to his country : but these achievements were sullied by coarse and brutal manners, by turbulence, deceit, and cruelty. He made a change of great consequence in the formation of the army, by enlisting poor and necessitous citizens, below the usual census, and even slaves. These, at the command of their leader, were as ready to fight against as for the senate and the laws : and Marius, who knew but one method of governing, employed at last a body-guard of assassins, who at a sign from him put to death any obnoxious citizen of whatever rank.

This system of terror was carried still farther by Sylla. He “sacrificed to the muses and graces” more than his rival Marius, it is true ; but the savage passions of Marius were less de-

¹ Plutarch's *Lives of Marius and Sylla*, Livy, *Valerius Max.* B. 2. Sallust. *Bell. Jugurth.* and *Catal.*

structive than Sylla's deliberate, cold-blooded proscriptions and wholesale massacres. When this usurper made himself perpetual dictator, (B.C. 81) the sword was the sceptre which governed Rome.

Amidst these sanguinary scenes the soldiers became familiar with faction, and conscious of their power: and from the example of Marius the career of ambition was opened to unprincipled adventurers of obscure family, by the most flagitious means. Some years before the period at which our observations point, the forces of the Marian faction in Asia had mutinied, and killed their general. And now (B.C. 67) the army of Lucullus refused to obey him. In the character of this great commander may be traced a selfish covetousness, cold and reserved manners; and he was more indulgent to the conquered natives than to his own soldiers. But such charges at the worst will not account for this mutinous disaffection against an able and successful chief, eager to lead his troops to new victories: other causes must have contributed, particularly the intrigues of his brother-in-law, the infamous Clodius, with the army, and of Pompey's partisans at Rome.

Pompey¹, while yet young, had been saluted by Sylla with the title of Great, on account of his triumphant campaign in Africa. He had the rare good fortune to be at once the favourite of the senate, the citizens, and the army: and having gained glory in Spain, signalized himself lately more than ever by defeating and entirely destroying with wonderful celerity the pirates, who swarmed upon the seas of Italy and Greece: With a pompous affectation, which disgusted even his friends, Pompey professed a reluctance to undertake the Asiatic war. But this was mere pretence; Lucullus was superseded, and the laurels, which were almost within his grasp, were destined to adorn his successor. Pompey pushed the war with such vigour and ability, that he entirely defeated the united forces of Mithridates and Tigranes in a pitched battle, drove Mithridates into Scythia, and forced the Armenian to make a disadvantageous peace. The Roman general builds the city Nicopolis on the field of his victory, and bestows it on his soldiers; and being intent on the conquest of Syria, proceeds to Damascus.

¹ Plutarch's Life of Pompey.

Thither the two Jewish brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, contending for the sovereignty of Judea, sent embassies to Pompey, as to the arbiter of their pretensions. The nation of the Jews, says Josephus, by their ambassadors at the same time complained of both brothers, as not desiring to be under kingly government, but in subjection, like their forefathers, to the Priests of the God whom they worshipped¹. Perhaps on account of this representation, aided by the intrigues of Antipater, the Roman general inclined in favour of Hyrcanus, although Aristobulus had sent him a present of a golden vine, valued at five hundred talents². This Strabo says he afterwards saw at Rome.

While Pompey was at Damascus, Plutarch relates that twelve kings, of course of petty sovereignties, came to pay their court to him: and soon afterwards Mithridates, the most formidable enemy of Rome, died; yet Aristobulus, of an impetuous spirit, having left Damascus in disgust, had the imprudence to fortify Jerusalem against the Roman army. Such is the strength of the

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. 14. c. 3.

² Rather more than one hundred and seventy thousand pounds sterling, according to the computation of the Jewish silver talent in Dr. Arbuthnot's tables.

place by nature, that it held out three months against the besiegers; notwithstanding there was a party for Hyrcanus within the walls. At last it was taken, in consequence of the superstitious observance of the Sabbath-day: since the time of the Maccabees, the Jews would fight, if attacked, on the Sabbath; but on that day they would not perform any laborious work to stop the progress of the enemy. In consequence, the Roman general had leisure to raise a bank or mound of earth, upon which he fixed his engines, and battered the wall and the temple; and having made a breach, took the city by assault. (B.C. 63.) The Jews lost twelve thousand men; the Romans only a few¹. The Jews ascribed so much mysterious sanctity to the temple and the Holy of Holies, that it is not surprising great curiosity was excited to see the interior of these buildings. Accordingly, Ptolemy and his officers entered the temple, and by this intrusion, profaned it in the eyes of the Jews: "Yet," says Josephus, "Pompey touched nothing of the golden ornaments, spices, and treasure, amounting to two thousand talents; on account of his regard to religion², and in this point he acted in a manner

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. 14. c. 4.

² Cicero, in his oration for L. Flaccus, § 28, says, "Pom-

that was worthy of his virtue." At the same time he exercised this characteristic generosity, he took care to make Jerusalem tributary to Rome, and deprived the Jews of the cities which they had subdued, reducing them within their own bounds.

The Jewish historian, though partial to the Romans, laments over the fall of his country : "Thus," says he, "through the strife of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, we lost our liberty, and became subject to the Romans, and were deprived of our conquests. Moreover, the Romans exacted heavy tribute ; and the royal authority, which was a dignity formerly bestowed on the high priests, came to private men."

Pompey, on his return to Rome (B.C. 61), with great right, claimed, and held a triumph, more splendid than had ever before been witnessed in that metropolis, which had now become the centre of the world's wealth and magnificence. He

peius, captis Hierosolymis, victor ex illo fano nihil attigit.—Sapienter, quòd in tam suspiciosâ et maledicâ civitate locum sermoni obtrectatorum non reliquit. Non enim credo religionem et Judæorum, et hostium, impedimento præstantissimo imperatori, sed pudorem fuisse." The contempt of the Romans for the Jews breaks out in incidental expressions.

paid vast sums into the public treasury, and what was still more to his credit, sent back the captives to their own countries, instead of putting them to death, according to custom. It is well to find this redeeming circumstance of lenity and humanity in times which exhibit a general dissoluteness and corruption of moral virtue. The year before Pompey's triumph was marked by Catiline's conspiracy, the principal actors in which are immortalized to their infamy by the eloquence of Cicero. Extremes meet; and selfishness and duplicity, the vices of savage life, characterize this age of Rome's refinement. Cicero¹ exhausts the language of vituperation upon two Consuls, whom he describes as monsters of licentiousness and rapacity, holding office merely for the purpose of plundering the provinces. One of these, Gabinius, was governor of Syria (B.C. 56); and according to Josephus², conducted himself in Judea in a praiseworthy manner. Finding Hyrcanus to be incapable of governing, and that the country was still disturbed by the faction of his brother, Gabinius replacing Hyrcanus in the high priesthood, di-

¹ Oraat. pro P. Sextio, et De Provinciis Consularibus.

² Antiq. B. 14. c. 5, 6.

vided Judea into five separate districts, or provinces, with an independent court of government in each ; and thus changed the kingly authority into that of an aristocracy. Dean Prideaux¹ also makes mention, from the Talmud, of a Jewish court, called the court of Three ; in which controversies about bargains and contracts were decided, one litigant choosing one judge, and the other another, and these two judges a third. The cases were settled summarily, without professional men, upon the testimony adduced by the parties. Such a judicature of reference, or arbitration, being very consistent with Christian principles, might, it should appear, be adopted in the present times, for the useful purposes of avoiding delay and expense in the administration of justice.

Crassus succeeds to the government of Syria, and being devoid of the feelings of religion or shame, which restrained Pompey, pillages the temple of Jerusalem. But the time had approached, when these two powerful leaders of parties at Rome were to give way before the ascendancy of Julius Cæsar. Rome desired, and was prepared for, the government of a king, or

¹ Connect. Part II. B. 7. p. 454.

rather of an emperor, a military commander. The senate would have preferred Pompey, who had much finer qualities than Marius or Sylla; and a better disposition than Octavius Cæsar; and who would have been content with the show of power, and still left much authority to the senate. But that body had gradually lost influence, particularly since the bribes notoriously distributed among them by Jugurtha ¹ the Numidian prince. The army possessed the real sway in the state, and Julius Cæsar over the army, on account of the energy of his character, comprising the greatest enterprize with the greatest circumspection. Of noble birth, and agreeable manners, learned, and eloquent, he was admired by those who disapproved his profligate ambition; his clemency won many hearts; he governed the daring and unprincipled, by being more daring and unprincipled than they; and his superior genius overawed mankind, for as he seemed to aim at objects beyond other men, he appeared to have unexhausted resources within himself for attaining them, and such as could not be anticipated.

In the midst of the political convulsions of the

¹ Sallust Bell. Jug.

time, Judea, under the management of the wily Antipater (for Hyrcanus was a puppet in his hands), adhered always to the leading powers of Rome. The Jews did good service to Julius Cæsar in his Egyptian war; and accordingly, this conqueror, in return, confirmed Hyrcanus in the high priesthood, and bestowed on Antipater the privilege of a citizen of Rome, and made him procurator of Judæa. (B.C. 47.) About the same time the celebrated Herod, Antipater's son, began to take a part in public affairs, and shewed even more ability than his father, in pursuing the same course of policy. He greatly strengthened his interest at home by marrying Mariamne, grand-daughter of the high priest, Hyrcanus: and having gone to Rome at a fortunate juncture, when Mark Antony and Octavius Cæsar were reconciled for a time, these two powerful interests united in his favour, and so far prevailed, that by the unanimous voice of the senate, Herod was appointed king of Judea¹. (B.C. 40.) He succeeded to an uneasy throne, and unexpectedly; but his bustling, restless spirit, was well qualified to maintain, by arms, that supreme authority, which had fallen into weakness in the hands of

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 14. c. 14.

the degenerate representatives of the Asmonean family.

Still, a nephew of Hyrcanus, by name Antigonus, had a party in his favour, who disputed Herod's right to the crown, terming him "a private man"¹ (not of royal blood), of Idumæan race, a half Jew : they fortified Jerusalem, and kept it for three years. But at length Herod, assisted by the Romans, took the city by assault ; and Antigonus was, by order of M. Antony, brought to Antioch², and there beheaded. Thus ended the government of the Asmoneans, one hundred and twenty-six years after it was first established, a family not more illustrious by birth than by many great actions performed in peace and war for the benefit of their nation. Their descendants wasted themselves in private dissensions, while the country was really in the power of strangers ; thus acting with an infatuation which can only be compared to that of persons, who, being all inmates of one house, should rise in arms to shed each other's blood, while the building was in flames around them.

Herod justified the choice of the Romans, by governing Judea with vigour and capacity, during

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 14. c. 15.

² Ibid. B. 15. c. 1.

a long reign of thirty-four years ; but, as far as regards his domestic happiness, and the credit of his character, it would have been better for him, if he had never obtained the kingdom. But the will of Providence must be accomplished, and the time approached, when the sceptre was to depart from Judah. Herod's determination of character degenerated into tyranny, and excessive unexampled cruelty, after his temper was exasperated by continual factions, and his jealousy awakened against his wife, Mariamne, on account of her ambitious views for her own (the Asmonean) family.

While the Romans took part with Hyrcanus and Herod, the Parthians made it their policy to support Antigonus, and having in a successful invasion, captured Hyrcanus, they carried him into Parthia¹, and cut off his ears, in order to deprive him, by this mutilation, of the power of again exercising the dignity of high priest. After Antigonus was put to death, the office of high priest therefore became vacant ; and Herod, with very shrewd policy, sent for one Ananelus², an obscure priest from Babylon, and appointed him

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 14. c. 13. 10. See Leviticus xxi. 17—24.

² Ibid. B. 15. c. 2, 3.

to that dignity as one who could never interfere with the royal authority. But the measure was too violent to be palatable; and Herod found it necessary soon to depose Ananelus, and to confer the high priesthood on Aristobulus, then only seventeen years of age, the brother of his wife, in whom the claims of the Asmonean family to the pontifical and regal titles all centered. Herod had originally gone to Rome with a design of obtaining the kingdom of Judea for this Aristobulus, and in the hope of governing in his name; as his father, Antipater, had the real power of the state under Hyrcanus: but when Aristobulus, officiating at the feast of tabernacles in his pontifical robes, had captivated the people by the grace of his manner, and beauty of his person, the king's suspicions were aroused, and he soon caused him to be made away with, as a rival. The aged Hyrcanus, though maimed, a prisoner, and imbecile, still attracted respect among the Jews at Babylon, and became also, in his turn, an object of jealousy to Herod, who contrived to get him into his power, and put to death the innocent old man, now past eighty years of age, the last male representative of the Asmoneans¹.

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 15. c. 9.

After the battle of Actium, Herod repaired to Octavius Cæsar at Rhodes ; and made a frank declaration, that “as he had assisted Antony with fidelity, while there was any hope for his affairs, he now offered his friendship with the same zeal to the victor.” Cæsar was pleased, accepted his offer, and ordered the king to resume his diadem. The Roman chief received ample presents, and Herod, on his part, ever retained an extraordinary share of the imperial favour¹. It is, indeed, a matter of curiosity by what means Jerusalem, and the cities of Asia Minor, obtained those vast treasures and riches, which became the prey and spoil of Rome, out of India ; for it does not appear that any other country could have supplied gold and silver in abundance. Herod, doubtful of his success with Cæsar, had left his wife, Mariamne, in safe custody, with orders truly Asiatic, that, in case evil happened to him, she should not be allowed to survive him : and now he found bitter troubles awaiting him at home. According to Josephus’s account, his wife, and her mother, Alexandra, a woman of talent, priding themselves on their high Jewish descent, took offence at the bloody

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 15. c. 7. De Bell. Judaic. B. 1. c. 15.

and tyrannical precautions of Herod for securing the throne to his family. These dissensions were fomented by Herod's mother, and his sister, Salome, who, upon an occasion of disdain and ill-humour, expressed against him by his wife, so encreased his irritation, and inflamed his suspicions of Mariamne's political intrigues, that he put her to death, in the thirteenth year of his reign. (B.C. 27.) Mariamne was a beautiful, accomplished, and virtuous princess, and passionately beloved by Herod, notwithstanding her imperious temper. But in the Roman Empire and its dependencies the demon of ambition took possession about this time of the principal personages, male and female ; for they eagerly pursued the fantastic advantage of sovereign rule, through blood and crimes, regardless of the obligations of religion, virtue, and decency, and even of the common feelings and natural instincts of humanity. The competitors in this wild race of political honours adopted the maxim, that they must either kill or be killed. And never did the world more need an example of meekness, humility, and patient virtue, than when the Saviour of mankind came to lead a life of suffering.

Herod had frequent fits of remorse for his barbarity to Mariamne, the best beloved of all his

numerous wives; he could not rest by night or day; and would often call upon her unconsciously as if she were still alive ¹. But these feelings did not abate his resolute purpose of governing: and upon some new provocation given by Alexandra, Mariamne's mother, by meddling in state affairs, he ordered her also to execution. The brighter parts of Herod's history are, his warlike expedition against the Arabians, whom he defeated so quickly and effectually, that neither they nor any foreign power again disturbed his government; and the vigilant care with which he attended generally to the welfare of his subjects. Upon an occasion of grievous famine Herod generously sold his richest furniture and finest vessels of gold and silver, framed by skilful artists, and with the money bought corn in Egypt in abundance, sufficient to supply his own people, and the inhabitants of the districts bordering on Judea ². He also repaired, enlarged, and beautified the temple at Jerusalem at his own cost; and because the Jews were afraid, when he first made the proposition, that if the old edifice were pulled down, the new undertaking would never be completed, Herod wisely quieted these appre-

¹ Joseph. De Bell. Judaic. B. 1. c. 15.

² Joseph. Antiq. B. 15. c. 9.

hensions, by bringing all the materials for the new work to the spot, before he began to demolish any part of the old building. Upon another occasion, when, after the Roman manner, he celebrated games in honour of Cæsar at Jerusalem, the Jews were offended at the innovation upon their national customs, and were particularly disgusted with the trophies, which resembled images, considering that any honour paid to them savoured of idolatry: but Herod, with great good sense, stripped off the armour and ornaments, and shewed there was nothing beneath¹ but bare stocks of wood, and thus turned the superstitious horror of the people into laughter. The king invariably courted the Romans, and built two towns in honour of Augustus Cæsar, Sebaste in Samaria, and Cæsarea by the sea, with a large haven: and on different occasions he endeavoured to introduce Roman customs among the Jews; although at Jerusalem he was obliged to abstain from shocking their religious opinions, from motives of policy; for we cannot give him credit for real piety. With all his dexterity he could not master the sect of the Pharisees, who, by their pretensions to su-

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 15. c. 8.

perior sanctity and a knowledge of traditional law, obtained great sway over the multitude; and had ¹ cunning enough to inveigle the females of Herod's family into their schemes.

Josephus, in relating the incongruities of Herod's character, his magnificence, beneficence, and ability on the one hand, and on the other his severe and unrelenting disposition, makes this sensible remark, that these contradictions are accounted for by considering his master-passion, the ambitious love of honour. To this he sacrificed, as we have seen, his domestic peace; and the same motive which caused him in the early part of his reign to commit so many murders in his family, now towards the close of it, excited him to put to death his two sons by Mariamne. (B.C. 6.) Sixteen years before, he had sent them to Rome for education, and upon their arriving at maturity married them to suitable wives: but his sister, Salome ², (though one of them had married her daughter) instilled into Herod the same suspicions which had been fatal to their mother, Mariamne, that the young men formed designs against their father's life, in order to obtain possession of his kingdom. These accusations were made more

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. 17. c. 2.

² Ibid. B. 16. 7.

plausible by the art and treachery of Antipater¹, an elder son of Herod, by Doris, who hoped to supplant his two brethren, the sons of Mariamne, and by extinguishing in them the claims of the Asmonean race, to open a way to the throne for himself. Antipater was executed only² five days before Herod died, for treasonable plots against his father: and the sentence seems to have been just in this instance, while Herod, in condemning his own son, resembled the elder Brutus in stern severity, but not in virtuous motives.

Considering that the times were full of instances of atrocities perpetrated from ambitious motives, and that Herod's character in this respect out-heroded the times, it is very probable he should put to death the infants at Bethlehem; according to the relation of St. Matthew, (ii. 16.) in order to crush a competitor for the throne. Herod cared little for the Messiah, expected about this period by the Jews, in fulfilment of one distinct prophecy³, and whose birth-place was marked at Bethlehem by a second⁴ prediction equally distinct; his religious observances were

¹ Antiq. B. 17. c. 7. and Wars, B. 1. c. 23.

² Wars, B. 1. c. 33. Antiq. B. 17. 7.

³ Dan. ix. 25.

⁴ Micah v. 2.

assumed from policy, and not the result of genuine feeling and conviction; and the announcement of this anointed One, this Deliverer, by the ominous title of King of the Jews, kindled into fury the fears and jealousies which had haunted the tyrant's whole life.

Our subject leads us, not to a detail of the events of our Lord's life upon earth, but to a consideration of the circumstances in the then state of Judea and of the Roman empire, which affected the propagation of the Gospel doctrines. We have seen that the whole nation of the Jews, guided by the light of prophecy, expected about this time the advent of the Messiah; but their wishes led them to a wrong interpretation of his character in the Scriptures, and to clothe him with the attributes of a temporal deliverer and mighty prince. This expectation, that "out of Judea should now come one who should govern the world," was so general and notorious, that it is mentioned by Tacitus and Suetonius¹, and is especially stated by Josephus as the chief cause

¹ Tacitus Hist. lib. v. c. 13. Suetonius in Vespasiano, cap. 4. Josephus de Bell. l. vi. c. 5. S. 4. and l. ii. c. 13. S. 4. and Antiq. l. xx. c. viii. S. 6.

of the rebellions of the Jews against the Roman power. The Roman historians, naturally enough, make these predictions apply, by a forced construction, to their patron and contemporary, the emperor Vespasian, and his son Titus; and Josephus, who Romanizes upon every opportunity, falls into the same courtly flattery. It is not surprising that the Jews should have expected a second Moses or David, to rescue the chosen nation from the yoke of the Gentiles, particularly as they had long been weary of the kings imposed upon them by foreigners, and as all the world were at that period eagerly and familiarly pursuing the race of ambition: but the office of the Messiah was to offer up his life for the sins of mankind, to redeem them from death, by the atoning sacrifice of himself; it was therefore necessary that he should come like "a lamb to the slaughter," without power or disposition to resist.

The Jews, generally, were thus disappointed, by the humble and mean condition of Jesus, his repugnance to assume temporal command and authority, and his refusal of the homage of the turbulent multitude: this was not the Christ of their inclinations. But it may be said that the Jews, for some centuries past, had been prepared, as

we have endeavoured to shew, for a spiritual religion, and the hope of eternal life, by national calamities, by the ministration of the prophets, and the reading and interpretation of the holy Scriptures in the Synagogues. We find in the New Testament, that this good effect was actually produced in many instances, especially after our Lord's ascension, and the effusion of the Holy Spirit ; but it was checked, and in a great measure frustrated, by the vain-glorious notions of the Messiah's character, to which we have alluded, and by the prevailing religious system. The most influential sect, the Pharisees, established a mode of devotion, since proverbially called by their name, which sacrifices the spirit of piety to sanctimonious pride, and a precise, scrupulous formality in petty observances. The Sadducees, consisting chiefly of persons of condition, in easy circumstances, were a better sort of epicureans, who, though unbelievers in a future state of retribution, acknowledged the temporary dispensations of Providence in rewarding virtue and punishing vice. The circumstances of the world, in which the ungodly are continually seen in prosperity, so effectually contradict this scheme of Divine judicial superintendence, that it is to be feared such a religious profession can have little

influence on the heart and conduct, serving rather for an excuse against the charge of declared impiety, while it allows an escape from the obligations and duties of life, by absolving the conscience from the wholesome terror of future responsibility. Men of this stamp are free to live as they like, without shocking themselves or others by open irreligion; the worst that can happen to them is, that existence should become an intolerable burden, which they can, at any time, by their own voluntary act, lay down, and seek refuge and repose in the grave: their virtue consists in selfish ease and pleasure, and in steering their conduct by good policy, according to circumstances. Thus it appears our Lord¹ ranked in the same class, the Sadducees and the worldly-minded Herodians. Against all these sects, Jesus Christ, with his forerunner, John the Baptist, set himself, from the beginning, in direct, unsparing, uncompromising hostility, which they returned with bitter implacable animosity. It is obvious, that an impostor would have found it his interest to act very differently, for instance, by conciliating some of the leading parties, particularly the Pharisees, and by yielding to the

¹ St. Matthew xvi. 11. St. Mark viii. 15.

passions of the populace. We may also here remark, that the paucity of numbers of the sect of the Sadducees suggests a reasonable inference, that the nation generally believed in the doctrines of a resurrection and eternal life, derived from patriarchal tradition and the writings of the prophets.

The vigorous character of Herod had preserved a regular government in Judea ; but after his death all things fell into confusion. His sons quarrelled about sharing his dominions, under his will, the decision of which was left to the emperor Augustus¹: while this great cause was pending, furious insurrections took place in Judea, sometimes excited by impostors and adventurers, and sometimes springing from an honest spirit of patriotism, which aimed at national independence, and was inflamed by the rapacity of the Roman procurator. Archelaus was at length appointed to succeed his father Herod, not as king of the whole country, but as ethnarch over Judea, Idumea and Samaria ; Augustus seems to have distrusted his character, and with reason, for after a treacherous and

¹ Josephus, Antiq. B. xvii. c. 9, 10, &c.

tyrannical government of about nine years, he was, upon the complaint of his subjects, deposed by the emperor, and banished to Vienne, in Gaul, (A.C. 8¹). Judea was then made formally part of the Roman province of Syria; it no longer constituted a separate kingdom, under its own laws, administered by native princes and priests, and from that day has never regained its independence: according to the prophecy of Moses², “the sceptre departed from Judah, for the Shiloh, or the Messiah, had come.” Coincidences of this kind are not in the ordinary course of events, and are calculated to make a deep impression upon those who will seriously consider their wonderful coherence with the whole system of the Christian religion, as delivered in the Scriptures. The Jews, enraged by the taxation of the Romans, and the repeated profanations of their temple, and encouraged by misapplied promises of Divine protection, flew to arms frequently in revolt; and thus, by their judicial blindness³ and infatuation, brought upon themselves those extreme national calamities, which their law de-

¹ Our Lord was born in the fourth year before the common æra.

² Genesis xlix. 10.

³ Romans xi. 8.

nounced, and which were inflicted by their heathen rulers. Meanwhile, the Roman sovereignty afforded some protection to Christ and his apostles, from the malignity of their countrymen : expecting a temporal prince in the Messiah, they despised and rejected one, whose kingdom was not of this world, and who brought life and immortality to light, by teaching men to worship God, not with vain ceremonies, but in spirit and in truth. Thus, the extraordinary and unprecedented state of Judea, contributed to fulfil the Scriptures, through men who acted unconsciously as the instruments of Providence ; and it became evident, to future generations, that the Jews, by wickedly crucifying the Lord Jesus, proved the truth of his mission. They contributed also to prepare for the propagation of the Gospel, by their firm adherence to the great religious truth of the unity of the Godhead, and by preserving, with reverence and fidelity the sacred deposit of the holy Scriptures ; by these means, a check was opposed to Polytheism, idolatry, and false superstitions, and oracles, with which the heathen world abounded, and intimations of revealed religion were scattered imperceptibly, and with effect, among surrounding nations. The expectation of the Messiah, though mingled with erro-

neous notions of his character, awakened attention to the claims of Jesus Christ; and the hope of eternal life, corrupted and obscured as it was by Pharisaical doctrines, found a responsive and sympathetic feeling in the human heart. If these leading and consolatory tenets won their way in part, through darkness and error, in spite of the unsocial, inhumane customs of the Jews, and the repulsive, exclusive bigotry of their attachment to the rite of circumcision, and the privileges of the blood of Abraham; how much more were they calculated to prevail, when cleansed from impurities, and taught in all their real beauty and sublimity, by persuasive preachers, equally powerless and unwilling to do injury. Yet such is the force of evil habits and of worldly temptations, counteracting and overcoming reason and righteousness, that the Gospel obtained not a settlement without miracles.

The description of the state of Judea incidentally given in the New Testament, has the liveliness of a picture taken with accuracy and fidelity on the spot; as a mere account of facts and persons no history is comparable to it, and all the researches of learned men add but little to the strong impression produced by this brief narrative. The works of the cotemporary Jewish

authors, Philo and Josephus, abundantly confirm the account of Judea given by the Evangelists.

We may imagine with what cordial joy the Prophets and holy men, restorers of the national establishments after the Babylonish captivity, would have greeted our Saviour's appearance in the flesh, after the manner of Simeon and Anna. But the religious instructors of the day were persons of a very different character: under the title of Rabbis, or Doctors of the Law, they engrossed the real power and authority of the nation, especially after the decline of the Kings and High Priests, and from their body were appointed the teachers in the schools and synagogues, and the members of the great council or Sanhedrim at Jerusalem. This institution might have been framed after the example of Moses¹; but its origin is now traced, by general agreement, to the times of "the great synagogue," from Ezra (B.C. 536.) until the death of the High Priest, Simon, (B.C. 292.) surnamed the Just, who completed the canon of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as we now have them; and whose eulogy is given in the book called Ecclesiasticus (c. 50.) and by Josephus².

¹ Numbers xi. 16.

² Antiq. xii. 2. 5.

The elders, members of this synagogue in succession, possessed the chief and popular authority among their countrymen, according to the rule of the Holy Scriptures, which it was their business to publish accurately and explain correctly. At first the book of the law ¹ was read and explained in the open air in the street; and as during the Babylonish captivity the Jews had lost the familiar knowledge of the Hebrew language, and acquired the use of the Chaldee, it was necessary to expound its meaning by *Targums*, a Chaldee word signifying versions or paraphrases. Though sacrifices continued to be performed at the temple, yet by degrees the synagogue worship, attended with the weekly reading of the Scriptures, became the great means of religious instruction, and an effectual preservative against idolatry; original inspiration having ceased, the Scribes, or Lawyers, or Rabbis ², for these are nearly synonymous terms,

¹ Nehem. viii. 3.

² A very full and learned account of the History of Jewish Traditions is given by Dean Prideaux, *Connection*, under the year 446. B.C. Mr. Milman, with his usual elegance, describes clearly the rise and progress of the Rabbinical school. *History of the Jews*, Vol. III. B. 19.

succeeded to the office of the Prophets, as interpreters of the Divine Will.

But as is the case in all human affairs, abuses crept into this system, even though founded on the principle of venerating and spreading the word of God. The targum or version insensibly became a paraphrase of the text, and the explanation a commentary, to which was ascribed, in some instances, probably with justice, a descent by oral tradition from the time of Moses. In process of time, these traditionary interpretations were considered equally sacred with the text, the meaning of which was determined by them ; and inferences and deductions were continually added to the traditions, after the time of Simon the Just, by the Mishnical doctors, until at our Saviour's advent, the word of God was made of no effect in the accumulation of human commentaries.

Still we find in the New Testament ¹ instances of the benefit derived from the public reading of the Scriptures in the synagogues ; the people being thus familiarized with the words of the law and the prophets, our Lord and his Apostles readily directed their attention to the accom-

¹ Luke iv. 16. Acts xiii. 15.

plishment of them in the ministry of Jesus Christ, and the delivery of the Gospel. The first converts were principally convinced by this mode of reasoning ; but the nation at large could not emancipate themselves from the sway of the Rabbis¹, for the most part of the Pharisaical

¹ Misna signifies the traditional interpretation, Masora the traditional reading of the Scriptures. Rabbi Judah, surnamed Hakkadosh, the holy, collected into a methodical digest, in the second century after Christ, the received oral traditions, which were in danger of being scattered and lost. This digest is called the Misna ; and from its reputed sanctity became the study of the learned Jews in Babylonia, who, by degrees, added a commentary to it, called Gemara, the complement, or full explanation. The Misna and Gemara together are the Talmud ; the Jerusalem Talmud was completed about A.D. 300, and has been published in one volume folio ; the Babylonish Talmud, that most esteemed by the Jews, was completed about A.D. 500, and has been printed at Amsterdam in twelve folios. The contents of the Talmud in our country are chiefly known by the learned labours of Lightfoot ; and his extracts show much frivolous unbecoming trash, with fanciful mystical significations of words and letters. Still one would like to see an exact and faithful translation of some one part of the Misna, or of the Compendium, by which Maimonides gained so much reputation in the twelfth century. Yet if the whole Misna be like that treatise on the Sabbath, edited by Dr. Wotton (London, 1717,) the mine will not repay the labour of working. The Rabbis, belonging

sect, and the authority of the traditions. After the destruction of Jerusalem, a judgment explicitly foretold by our Saviour, and the dispersion of the Jews, the Rabbinical system continued and increased for centuries, and since they were deprived of their country and government, has been, as a measure of human polity, the chief bond of their national community.

These facts afford a striking lesson of the inestimable value of the Holy Scriptures in the work of the Propagation of the Gospel; and of the necessity and duty of giving publicity to the genuine text of the word of God in its simplicity and purity. No human learning, no human authority, or system of religion, can compensate for the want of the Scriptures; and experience shows that without a constant reference to them, all other means of piety degenerate, and fall into corruptions and abuses. The lapse of the Israelites into idolatry may be traced chiefly to their neglect of the Mosaic admonition to attend to the Scriptures; and again the partial revival

to a nation excluded from the great affairs of the world, and many practical duties of life, fell into speculative subtleties and vapid casuistries; from this morbid influence the native colour of their religion is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

and restoration of the nation rested upon their obedience to that command under Ezra. Our Lord himself appeals to the Scriptures, and enjoins the people to search¹ them, in contradistinction to the expositions of their teachers, whom he designates as “blind leaders of the blind².” One of the first duties of a Christian minister, therefore, is to disseminate the written word; and he must be careful in his exhortations to separate³ from it his own and all human commentaries, as of inferior authority; and to allow, and even exhort⁴, the people individually to judge for themselves upon single-hearted and faithful consideration, and repeated comparison of one part of Scripture with another. The right of private judgment by no means justifies a wanton, partial, wilful, passionate enthusiasm; but is to be exercised according to sound deliberate discretion, with attention to the opinions of wise and good men, with hearty piety and prayer to God; otherwise it is pregnant with errors and confusion, and strife and causeless sinful schisms; as over-strained authority produces corruptions of doctrine and tyranny.

¹ St. John v. 39.

² St. Matt. xv. 14.

³ 1 Cor. vii. 40.

⁴ Ibid. x. 15. Acts xviii. 11.

What dangerous and fatal results soever may spring from the perversion of the truth by the ignorant and inexperienced, still truth it is, that each man, being answerable for his own soul before God, has a right to judge for himself of the terms of salvation proposed in the divine revelation : as in temporal affairs men are ruined by vice and folly, by a course of inconsiderate levity, regardless alike of prudent counsellors and the lessons of experience, so headstrong wickedness runs their souls to perdition ; the laws of God and man allowing them in both cases to be their own masters, and annexing a fearful personal responsibility to their conduct.

On the other hand, the advantages of human learning, order, and combination, are exceedingly great, and very strongly exemplified in the Rabbinical system itself, which, in a temporal sense, has for centuries been the conservative principle of the Jewish government, when all those other bonds, which usually unite communities, had among them been dissolved. The Christian minister will perceive, that the delivery of the Scriptures in their simplicity, the learning and authority of the priesthood, and the right of private judgment, so far from being incompatible with each other, are matters which harmonize together, and by the proper exertion of opposite

forces, contribute to keep the human mind in that middle course, which is the line of equity and truth, the high path-way of happiness and salvation.

Adverting to the state of the Roman empire, we find many circumstances of the time favourable to the propagation of Christianity. A profound peace subsisted throughout the world ; and Rome, rather weary of her magnificent system of perpetual conquests, became more inclined, under Augustus, to preserve, than extend her dominions. That vigorous power, suppressing, with a prompt hand, all revolts, insurrections, and tumults, afforded, at the same time, great facility to the mutual intercourse of nations, and allowed almost unlimited toleration of religious opinions, with impartial protection of civil rights, and the persons of individuals. Many instances of the advantages thus derived to the first Christians, appear in the New Testament, particularly in the history of St. Paul.

The penetration of Julius Cæsar, and the ascendancy of his character, are conspicuously proved, by the prevalence which his system of government, and his family, obtained over the affairs of the Roman empire, after his death. In vain such men as Brutus, and Cassius, and Cicero, and Cato, had appealed to better times, and en-

devoured, by exhortation and example, to revive, among the degenerate citizens, the love of liberty, and the principles of ancient virtue and patriotism. Rome was ripe for despotic rule, the senate retaining only the shadow of authority, and the power of the people having merged in the army. If the nephews of Augustus, the hopeful Marcellus, and Germanicus, another Scipio, had lived and reigned, they might have redeemed the imperial character, and prevented those indelible stains, cast by the first Cæsars on the purple ; but the time was past for restoring the national spirit and constitution of the commonwealth by the efforts of individuals, how distinguished soever. Or we should rather say, that human systems and institutions have in themselves the principles of decay and destruction, which, operating slowly and imperceptibly, are sure, in the end, to take effect : and then the frame of society is reconstructed afresh, by different artists, on a different plan, but with the same perishable materials. Tiberius surpassed Augustus in dissimulation, and cold unfeeling tyranny ; the servile senate eagerly anticipating his wishes and their own degradation. Governing by his favourite, the unprincipled Sejanus, the emperor came abroad only for purposes of ostentation, resigning himself in private to indolent indulgencies and

voluptuousness, while ambitious competitors for power removed their rivals by unscrupulous intrigues, by poisonings and assassinations ; and no citizen was safe from the decrees of arbitrary power, ruling by means of the prætorian guards ¹. Thus, for the old Roman government was substituted an oriental despotism.

With an Asiatic form of government came Asiatic manners, and a taste for expensive luxurious living. The suppers of Lucullus presented a splendid banquet at immense cost, instead of those simple unlaboured meals which fifty years before were graced by the society of Scipio and Lælius ; and during the century which followed the time of Lucullus, the Romans increased their habits of refinement and profusion, and attained to a degree of ornamental sumptuousness in their houses, villas, entertainments, and shows, which the luxuries of modern capitals may rival, but can scarcely exceed. The refine-

¹ This military establishment was begun by Augustus, and completed by Tiberius. Tacit. Annal. 4. 2. Suet. Aug. c. 49. Tiberius, c. 37. The Prætorian bands, consisting of ten or fifteen cohorts, of a thousand men each, had their fortified camp close to the walls of Rome. The emperor was elected "by the authority of the senate, and the consent of the soldiers." Tacit. Annal. xiii. 4.

ments and elegancies, which were enjoyed and dispensed by the liberal and cultivated mind of Lucullus, supplied to vulgar spirits merely the means of vanity and ostentation. As the simplicity of nature is sometimes confounded with grossness, artificial far-sought tastes are also mistaken for delicacy of feeling. It is surprising with what unanimous consent the Roman writers of the Augustan age, and of the periods immediately preceding and succeeding, describe and lament the decay of national manners and public spirit, the general decline of their countrymen from principles of sturdy independence, and conscious disinterested virtue, to servility, excess, and the selfish pursuit of riches and power. Poets, orators, satirists, and historians, all unite in the same account, that the encreasing softness of manners was attended with a laxity of morals; which may be particularly instanced in the facility of divorces, and the number of adulteries of the most abandoned character. Mutual¹ corruption was called the fashion, in this the most civilized and cultivated condition of mankind. The circumstances of those times

¹ Nemo illic vitia videt, nec corrumpere et corrumpi sæculum vocatur. Tacitus Germania xix.

prove that temporal prosperity and mental improvement will not conduce essentially to human happiness and virtue without religious principles. The lesson ought not to be lost upon the world, that among the Romans, in their most flourishing and powerful state, and at their highest point of intellectual proficiency, there was, by their own general confession, a want of moral obligation, as a rule of life. This want Christianity was expressly calculated to supply.

Farther vices of individuals and defects in their social institutions, though then unfelt by the Heathen, are very visible to our observation; we need only instance the exposition of children, and the condition of slaves. Yet, at that period, Rome had attained a superiority over other Pagan countries, in the practical excellence of a code of laws, founded on principles of substantial justice, in sentiments of humanity, in arts, sciences, and philosophy. Whatever unassisted reason could do for man was accomplished; but within the specious appearance of that splendid empire great failures were manifest, and the entire system was hollow and unsafe, like a house built on the sand. It appears part of the design of Providence, that this conspicuous and acknowledged instance of the insufficiency of human wis-

dom to prevent human wants, should immediately precede the Divine revelation, and indicate its necessity and use. When the Apostle to the Galatians¹ states that God sent forth his Son when "the fulness of time was come," we may presume there was a moral fitness in the circumstances of the period of Christ's advent, as well as an accomplishment of the prophecies.

Other obvious preparations for the reception of the Gospel may be mentioned; for instance, the old heathen superstitions were in a manner worn out, and become obsolete, without having their place supplied by any adequate substitute, while an ardent spirit of philosophical enquiry was abroad. As the Romans extended their conquests, and were engrossed by the passion of military aggrandizement, they became less and less attentive to the world of spirits. Viewing with contempt and disgust the superstitious follies, and profane rites of some other nations, particularly of the Egyptians, they learned to reflect upon the absurdity of their own system of auguries, and omens, and divination from the entrails of victims. It seems to have been a

¹ Gal. iv. 4.

common saying, that it was wonderful the ¹ Haruspices did not laugh when they met each other. The vices attributed to the popular deities and deified heroes were commonly ridiculed on the stage, in the plays of Plautus and Terence. But, unfortunately, together with these weeds of superstition and credulity were eradicated at the same time the wholesome fruits of rational belief and natural religion, namely the doctrines of a superintending Providence and a future state of retribution. Even the good Polybius ², one hundred and twenty or thirty years before Christ, treats the notion of punishment in another world as a useful fable, proper for keeping the common people under due restraint. This opinion gained ground, particularly after the prevalence of the Epicurean philosophy, to which the impious but elegant poem of Lucretius gave currency. Julius Cæsar ³ delivered openly in the senate the sentiment that death is a relief from all mortal ills; for neither joy nor sorrow have place beyond the grave. Cato and Brutus, men of much better

¹ Cicero De Nat. Deorum. 1. 26. and De Divin. 2. 24.

² B. 6. S. 54.

³ Sallust. Catal. Bel. 42.

principles and more virtue than Cæsar, by their examples of suicide, shewed a distrust, or rather despair, of Providence, and more reluctance to face the evils of life, according to the sullen pride of the Stoic philosophy, and to submit to the triumph of a conqueror, than fear or hope of eternity. The great boast of Roman courage was in overcoming the apprehension and horror of death, instinctive in our natures : this rigorous firmness being founded upon an overweening sense of human dignity, without reference to religion. Cicero belonged to a still better school of philosophy, founded on the sublime speculations of Plato with regard to the immortality of the soul, and the morality of Socrates, more virtuous than the Epicureans, more moderate and reasonable than the Stoics ; the great orator has shed the light of his genius over his treatises on religion and duties, subjects which no heathen writer has discussed with so much clear intelligence, adorned at the same time with consummate beauty of language. But after all, his principles are vague, his assertions inconclusive and contradictory ; and his “ flourishes of eloquence ” resemble the manner of an advocate, who is rather desirous to speak well on any side, than to choose the right. Dr. Middleton la-

bours hard to shew that Cicero's religion was built on the foundation of a God, a Providence, an immortality : but it is too plain his opinions¹ wavered, particularly in emergencies; that he considered these great doctrines as probable, not certain; hoped they might be true, rather than believed they were true. Thus as a reverence for the old mythology declined, no fixed system of religion was substituted in its place; the general impressions of the power of the Deity, and the nature of human virtue, which prevailed, continued much the same as those which had been embodied in the liveliest manner long before in Homer's agreeable poems. The poet, true to human nature, was a better teacher than most of the philosophers, with their recondite and artificial commentaries. It is true the common people, from habit, ignorance and prejudice, still adhered to the religious rites of their country; but it is a great mistake to suppose that in any nation they can long be induced to retain a reverence for opinions and ceremonies which persons of a higher class among them, and more enlightened understandings, openly despise.

¹ Ep. ad Fam. 5. 16. 21. See Dr. Middleton's Life of Cicero towards the end of Section xii. and the able remarks in a note to B. VIII. c. 9. of Hooke's Roman History.

Besides the importation of oriental luxury, the Romans imbibed from the learned court of the Ptolemies in Egypt, and especially from conquered Greece, a better knowledge, a love for the fine and liberal arts, and for literature; the dormant energies of the mind were kindled into action by a generous emulation of those illustrious persons, whose intellectual fame and merit descended from former times. The immortal memorials of Grecian genius, like sparks thrown among combustible matter, excited the Romans to exercise their understandings, that they might obtain similar reputation; as the trophies of Miltiades chased sleep from Themistocles. But except in the art of war, the scholars attained not to the excellence of their masters and prototypes; there is a natural freshness and raciness about the Greek models of art, learning, knowledge, and fancy, which neither the Romans, nor succeeding imitators, have quite equalled. Horace is indeed a writer of an original stamp, who has expressed moral maxims and poetical thoughts in the happiest language, and mingled good sense with an easy vein of polished humour. The Romans had long ceased to be barbarian conquerors; they cultivated a spirit of enquiry and thought, and examined for themselves, opening their minds

willingly to instruction, with capacities sharpened to receive it. This inclination, as the old religion gradually faded away, must have facilitated their acceptance of a doctrine, which taught new truths,—the depravity of man, the necessity of a Redeemer, and the resurrection; and must have rendered them capable of examining into the proofs of its authority.

The Sibylline oracles retained public respect among the last relics of pagan superstition at Rome; and a purified collection of them was deposited by Augustus¹ in golden cases in the temple of Apollo. It has been sometimes supposed, that these oracles conveyed some prediction or intimation of the Messiah; but little of this conjecture can be depended on, except that the Romans generally had acquired a respect for literature, and were so far prepared to receive a written communication of the Divine will. Upon a more intimate acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures, they must have felt admiration and surprise, at finding the most useful and equitable rules for the administration of government and the convenience of society, and the most humane

¹ Suetonius in Aug. See the Connection between the Sacred Writings, and Profane Literature, by the Bishop of Bristol. Chap. 25 and 26.

and liberal principles of action between man and man, propounded by Moses in an early and barbarous period with a tone of authority; while the Romans themselves had only, by slow degrees, and in a comparatively late æra, learnt to appreciate such happy moral maxims, and with great labour, and the research of successive generations, had wrought them in an insufficient manner into their system of polity. They could not fail also to observe, that no such book, no similar principles, existed among the other nations, whom they subdued, and at the same time civilized, by the same slow gradual process of improvement which they had themselves experienced, and which seems to be the natural, and almost necessary course of moral proficiency. The order of events in the world is, upon the whole, so inexplicable by human discernment, that the heathens were obliged perpetually to have recourse, both in their mythology and philosophy, to the hidden overruling power of destiny or fate, in order to decide the origin of those difficulties in life for which they could not account. In place of this dark and chilling system, the Jewish Scriptures presented them with the much more cheering, rational, and satisfactory notion of a parental Providence, watching

over human affairs, and producing good out of evil, by sure, though often inscrutable means ; and the Christian Revelation exhibited a completion of this doctrine, by bringing life and immortality to light, by shewing that a sacrifice had been made to atone for the sins of mankind, universally acknowledged and deplored, which they could not make for themselves, and by promising the necessary aid of the Divine Spirit, to enable men to attain that degree of virtue and happiness, after which they, of themselves, aspired with vain efforts.

It cannot be denied that such supernatural assistance, not only in the way of instruction, but also of inspiration and personal impulse, was wanted for the moral improvement of the heathen at their best state ; and their prior advancement and intellectual progress prepared them to see more clearly their deficiencies, and to receive this Divine message of good tidings.

Since that period, eighteen centuries have rolled away, with many vicissitudes of general ignorance and knowledge, the rise and fall of nations, the decay and annihilation of some empires, and the progressive prosperity of others. All that belongs to men has changed, except the Gospel ; laws, institutions, dynasties, govern-

ments, boundaries, languages, manners, and customs, all human affairs have experienced great and manifold revolutions. Augustus, if he could rise to life again, would not know his own capital, country and people. The change throughout Europe during modern times, has been greatly for the better; there is a general diffusion of more liberty, knowledge, comfort, and tranquillity in society, and a greater exercise of the mental powers. These improvements generally have had Christianity for their basis; and during that long period, the efforts of the best and wisest and most gifted individuals have been very much directed to spread the Gospel in its purity and simplicity, as the ground-work of all good public policy and private virtue, as the most effectual principle for promoting the welfare of the species. Let us, in our generation, endeavour to emulate these good examples, to extend to the best of our ability, wherever we can, the light of Revelation among the heathen, while we diligently order our own steps by its direction. It is a pleasing, consolatory, and reasonable supposition, that Providence, intending the greatest possible happiness for created beings, wills that the race of men, even on earth, should go on gradually in an increasing course of moral improvement;

and as far as we can see, the Gospel of Christ is the main instrument designed and calculated for effecting this benign purpose. Let us humbly strive to co-operate, in our limited capacity, with the Deity in this work of beneficence and utility, considering our dutiful service as an honourable privilege. No doubt there are fearful hurricanes and tempests in the moral, as in the natural world, which throw the cultivated field back to barrenness and deformity, times of gloom and distress, in which the labours of man are swept away and rendered unavailing, and his heart is chilled by disappointment and misfortune. But let us be encouraged, waiting the Lord's time, and performing our part with patient, cheerful exertion, and pious hope.

The great improvements in arts and manufactures, the discoveries in science, which have from time to time been presented to the world, and sometimes, if we may so speak, accidentally, have not been lost to succeeding generations ; on the contrary, they have, for the most part, carefully improved on the first suggestion : witness the art of printing, the mariner's compass, astronomical calculations, the invention of gunpowder, and of steam-engines, and those multiplied contrivances, by which con-

venient accommodation is supplied in houses, furniture, and clothing. It should seem part of the Divine scheme, that man, by his intelligence, is to obtain complete mastery and dominion over the natural materials of this earthly abode which he inhabits, and subject them, in succession, to his use.

But amidst all the refinements and improvements which have been proceeded with, in ancient or modern times, in relation to the visible things around us, there has been no farther discovery in spiritual matters. Of ourselves we know nothing, and can attain no knowledge of the nature of the souls which animate our bodies, and of their future eternal state ; on these points mere human instruction is as much at a loss amongst us, as among the Romans and the barbarians.

Excellence in the fine arts is progressive ; one age improves upon another in general knowledge, in jurisprudence, in medicine, in mechanics, in navigation, in natural philosophy, in agricultural, commercial, and mercantile pursuits ; but this is not the case with religion, and with the morality founded on religion.

The best Christian examples are the earliest ; and often the Reformers have been obliged to go

back to the primitive times for models of righteousness, and to the original letter of the Gospel, in order to clear away the rubbish and corruption heaped upon it by human devices. Is not this a strong proof of its divine authority ? Whatever man invents, man can improve, but the law of Christ will not bear tampering with ; like the law of nature it is as perfect as it can be from the first in substance, and human means are only wanting, not to amend (for that is impossible) but to explain, extend, and apply it, under the Divine blessing, universally among all nations. That the progress of evangelization is slow, to our apprehensions unaccountably slow, and often still more unaccountably interrupted, need not cause uneasiness to us, provided we conscientiously perform our duty, for the result is with the Highest Power, who saw fit to introduce the Gospel by very slow steps of preparation. It appears that the Romans, at the highest point of heathen civilization, considered happiness to belong to a simpler and more innocent condition of society ; and we, who have attained to greater civilization and knowledge than the Romans, must acknowledge that man, without the Gospel, is as prone as ever to vice, and as ignorant of futurity.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE EARLY PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL.

DURING our blessed Lord's ministry on earth, **many** converts were made in and about Jerusalem, and more in Galilee, where he resided ; but **his** doctrine was very imperfectly understood. Even the apostles continued to expect, in common with their countrymen, a temporal deliverer in the Messiah, and could not be persuaded but that their Master, notwithstanding his voluntary humiliation, and the moderation of his precepts, would, at some time, shake off the disguise of lowliness, and shew himself to the world in a splendor and dignity that became his character. When he was seized and dragged before Pilate's tribunal, they forsook him in terror ; and when he was at last put to an ignominious death, no supernatural aid intervening for his rescue, they became stunned and disheartened at the disap-

pointment of their liveliest hopes. What the resurrection from the dead meant, they knew not exactly, but remained in fear and perplexity doubtful what to believe and how to act.

Let the reader consider in how natural and artless a manner their state is described by the four Evangelists ; how irreconcilable this description is with the supposition of their being leagued in concert to support an imposture, in which case they would have been provided with some device for the emergency. Providentially the disciples were not molested : no search was made after them by Jewish or Roman authorities, on account, probably, of their humble station and character, and apparent insignificance. The enemies of Jesus Christ might consider, that by his crucifixion, the new doctrine was crushed and extinguished, and that his party, too contemptible for notice, would silently melt away, on account of the consternation of those who composed it. And without Divine interposition, it appears this would have been the case.

Some interval of time was necessary to enable the immediate followers of Jesus to recover their self-possession ; and after remaining about eight days at Jerusalem after his resurrection, they went, by Divine direction, into Galilee. He ap-

appeared to them both at Jerusalem and in Galilee, mingling reproof and comfort in his exhortations, opening their understandings and explaining the Scriptures concerning himself. Again they returned to Jerusalem with minds, we may conclude, more composed; and our Lord seems to have visited them repeatedly, until by their own reflections and Divine instruction, they became more familiar with the duty they had to perform. After forty days, our Lord "led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them, and carried up into heaven: and they worshipped him¹," and saw him no more. Yet so imperfect were their notions of the Gospel, that even at this last interview, the apostles asked their Divine Master, "Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel²?" Jesus directs their thoughts to far different matters, to the promise of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; and to the office they were chosen and appointed to execute. "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of

¹ Luke xxiv. 50.

² Acts i. 6.

the world¹.” “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come unto you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth².”

And now, for ten days before Pentecost, the apostles and disciples are left to themselves, without Divine communication; and they “continued, with one accord, in supplication and prayer,” “waiting for the promise of the Father.” The only event recorded at this time, is the election of Matthias in a solemn and pious manner, to fill the place of the betrayer. This interval, we may conclude, was employed by them in collecting their thoughts to some settled judgment upon the marvellous circumstances in which they had lately been concerned. They began now to have clearer notions of Christ’s character and doctrine, and to perceive it was necessary he should have *died* as he did. His kingdom was not, as they had vainly expected, of this world. He came not merely to preach righteousness for the restoration of Israel, but to offer himself a sacrifice for mankind. If his office had been only that of a

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

² Acts i. 8.

prophet or a king, God could have preserved Jesus Christ, as he preserved Moses and David, through many difficulties and against the machinations of all enemies, for the fulfilment of a long course of ministry. As the tumult of their feelings subsided, the disciples would gradually discover more and more proofs of the true reason why their Master was thus suddenly and ignominiously cut off, and that, in what befel him, the Scripture prophecies were fully, and accurately, though most unexpectedly to the Jews, accomplished. They never could have suspected him of hypocrisy and imposture: all such jealousy, the uniform goodness of his life, and the beneficent miracles he performed, forbade. But might he have been deceived himself, and supposed the Almighty had invested him with an office of higher powers than he really possessed? or might the gracious kindness of God, in sending his Son, have been defeated and frustrated by the sins of the Jewish nation? Had they, indeed, trusted in vain, that this was "he which should have redeemed Israel?" Such misgivings, we may reasonably suppose, came over the minds of the disciples upon the crucifixion of Jesus. But these doubts and fears were chased away by his resurrection from the dead, and frequent appear-

ances and conversations with them after he had risen, by his ascension, and by the visions of angels. They became convinced that their Master was as powerful, or more powerful, than they had ever supposed ; but that his power was to be exercised in a different manner than they had conjectured, and for a different object, not for temporal purposes, but for eternity ; not for the Jewish people exclusively, but for the salvation of the souls of men in all nations of the world. Reluctantly, perhaps, did even the apostles part with their hopes of earthly prosperity, of holding distinguished places in the train of a mighty conqueror, and acknowledged benefactor to mankind. But by slow degrees the light of truth broke through the mists which clouded their understandings. Being instructed what the redemption of the Messiah meant, a deliverance, namely, from sin, and its wages—death ; they ascertained also the quality of their own office. Their appointed business, they found, was to preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, and to be witnesses of the things relating to Jesus.

Thus is formed the visible Church, the body of Christ ; and in this society Peter takes the lead,

according to our Lord's promise, "Upon this rock I will build my Church ¹." Peter was distinguished by Jesus Christ on account of his singular confession of the true faith, and his firmness of character, as the apostle John was especially beloved for his affectionate disposition. They are described very naturally in Scripture, by different qualities, which are consistently preserved, with an air of truth, arising from the apparent absence of design. Peter is vehement, determined, and constant, when sure of the principle by which to shape his conduct; when doubtful on this point, he betrays a constitutional timidity. Shocked and bewildered at our Lord's seizure and destitution, he denied his Master with characteristic vehemence; but the same apostle was foremost to use the sword in that Master's defence ², and now, with deliberate resolution, braves the dangers which he knew must attend his service. What is still more remarkable, is the increase of St. Peter's religious knowledge in the short interval of forty days. Before, when Jesus had intimated what he was to suffer at Jerusalem, Peter said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee," and received a most severe rebuke for his

¹ Matt. xvi.

² 1 John xviii. 10.

worldly spirit. It is evident, that all along, he, in common with his companions, mistook the character of the Messiah. But now they are better informed, and begin to reason more accurately from the Scriptures, their confidence in their crucified Master being restored by his resurrection from the dead. Of this miracle Matthias is ordained, by lot, (in the most solemn manner of appointment possible) to be an especial witness, together with the eleven apostles: and all the disciples, waiting for the promise of the Holy Ghost, spend their time in peace, good order, and prayer.

The persons who, at Peter's suggestion, thus took upon them to make this first human nomination, or appointment, in the Church of Christ, were in number about one hundred and twenty. And it is impossible to consider the acts of this small company, destined to change the opinions of the world, without being convinced that the sincerity of their then belief in Christ arose from the proofs they had of his resurrection. Some impulse excites these poor, uneducated, and powerless men, unmolested, be it remembered, in their wonted obscurity, to undertake to promulgate doctrines which they were

sure would bring down upon their devoted heads, odium, poverty, trouble, and death. The apostles, it may be said, were ambitious; but they had just been disappointed in their favourite scheme of ambition, and had from fear deserted their Master in his last trial. This desertion they have voluntarily recorded against themselves; and the fact is confirmed by their having escaped suffering with him. Their known business now, the business of their lives, is to preach the Gospel; and for this great work they prepare themselves, "by continuing together, with one accord, in prayer and supplication." In this behaviour, be it observed, they may be imitated, and ought to be imitated, by all ministers of Christ, their successors.

The miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost at the appointed time, upon the disciples, confirmed their own belief, and gave evidence to the world of the reality of their mission. For these purposes the gift of tongues was eminently suited, being an undeniable miracle, of which those who possessed, and those who witnessed it, were all equally judges. Peter is again foremost. What encouraged this apostle, who some few weeks before denied Christ from personal fear, now to

declare him openly in public to all the men of Judea and the dwellers in Jerusalem? The ordinary motives of human actions will not account for so sudden a change under such circumstances. But "the power" of inspiration, received according to promise, will account for it, and make the whole story, a collection of wonders as it is, consistent.

Peter's speech is chiefly remarkable for arguments drawn from the Scriptures very appropriately, to convince the Jews that "God had made (according to his purpose) that same Jesus, whom the Jews crucified, both Lord and Christ." No more dreams of a temporal kingdom were entertained: his exhortation is "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Which promise was instantly fulfilled, even to the three thousand additional converts, for "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. And all that believed were together and had all things common—praising God and having favour with all the people." Effects, these, of Divine power, as certain, though

not so striking as "signs and wonders;" for never since has the Church of God exhibited a union of all its members so holy and happy as that state of felicity here described, destined, alas! like Adam's Paradise. to be of short duration. This pure Church, the mother of all the Churches, (since from it all those, wheresoever dispersed throughout the world, who, in all ages, have called themselves Christians, derived their faith) is our model. It may neither be practicable nor fit for us to follow exactly in all particulars the example of those who were immediately guided by the Holy Ghost: not experiencing ourselves that Divine influence to the extent they did, we may adhere to the letter of the primitive institutions, while the spirit may escape us. But if we really wish that God's will should be done on earth as it is in heaven, by means of the knowledge of his Gospel, we shall endeavour, in all humility, and in dependence upon the Divine aid and blessing, to imitate the simplicity and heartiness of this first Christian society. This would be the most proper and most effectual mode of spreading Christianity.

The next scene is the beginning of persecution. After Peter and John had miraculously

healed the lame man at the gate of the temple; “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,” the rulers of the Jews laid hands on them and put them in hold, “being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” The apostles were not dismayed; but spake boldly to their examiners,—“This (Jesus Christ) is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other.” The miracles performed by the apostles we cannot imitate; but we may endeavour to resemble them, by using the gifts with which God has endowed us in his service, and to his glory, and particularly by a temperate and wise boldness in preaching Christ, notwithstanding worldly opposition.

“The Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved.”—“Many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand; and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common, and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great

grace was upon them all¹." By this blessed influence of the Holy Spirit the kingdom of Christ on earth made astonishing growth quickly and imperceptibly, according to our Lord's prophecy : and the members of the Church were now so numerous, that no persecution could stifle their faith. Would to God the same Divine influence, abundantly poured forth, united us Christians at this day, in peace and righteousness ! Then would the Gospel soon spread through the whole earth. But human vices clog the grace afforded, and defeat it : and of this we have a deplorable instance springing up even among that primitive assembly.

Covetousness was the sin which first deprived the Church of its innocence, as detailed in the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Another and severer persecution arises from the rulers of the Jews, indignant and alarmed at the growing influence of the apostles over the multitude. They are imprisoned and miraculously delivered ; their lives are threatened, they are beaten, and commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus. They

¹ Acts iii. iv.

answered "we ought to obey God rather than men," and "departed rejoicing, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." The substance of their exhortations is given in simple and few words ; "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." And doubtless that inestimable gift will be bestowed to the end of the world upon all his obedient and faithful servants in due season, and according to the wisdom of God's pleasure.

The multitude (of believers) choose out seven deacons, upon whom the apostles lay their hands, and they are appointed, as part of their office, to superintend the distribution of food to the poor ; while the apostles devote themselves to the more important spiritual duties. "And the word of God encreased ; and the number of

the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

Stephen, though only of the order of deacons, is inspired in an especial and extraordinary manner, and on account of the fervor and zeal of his disputations, is charged before the Jewish council with having said, "this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us." Stephen, in his defence, enters into an abridgement of the religious history of the Jews, pointing out their frequent rebellions against God, and concluding with this sharp inference to his hearers, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."

The furious passions which lurk in the human heart, more furious when goaded by a bad conscience, broke forth against this bold preacher, and Stephen fell by a cruel death, gloriously and

triumphantly, the first of the noble army of martyrs in the cause of Christ. But is it then even so? Is the world so bad that it always hates and attacks those who would amend it? It must be remembered that St. Peter's address, substantially much the same as St. Stephen's, had a very different effect. Stephen, no doubt, provoked and irritated his hearers by reproaches, which at once exasperated them and shocked their prejudices; a manner of preaching the Gospel not to be proposed for general imitation. Yet was some such example necessary for Christian ministers in extreme cases, exhibiting at once perfect fortitude and perfect meekness, for as they stoned Stephen, he exclaimed, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Although there is not, perhaps, throughout the annals of Christendom a case exactly parallel with that of this first martyr, who thus brought instant death upon himself by his preaching; yet this early warning admonishes Christian ministers that they are to do their duty, at whatever cost to themselves, and to die, if need be, like faithful soldiers at their post. They are not, indeed, justified (not being directly inspired as Stephen was) in rashly provoking hostility.

The storm of persecution, which might at first have destroyed the infant Church, now after the lapse of some, perhaps twelve, months from our Lord's crucifixion, only served to scatter the disciples from Jerusalem, and gave occasion to them to extend the Gospel, and to fulfil Christ's last command.

Philip, the most distinguished of the deacons after Stephen, preaches at Samaria, and performing miracles converts many, and among them Simon Magus. The apostles send Peter and John to Samaria, who laid their hands on those baptized by Philip, and they received the Holy Ghost. The account of Simon, who thought the Divine gifts could be made a traffic of for money, shows at once the reality of those gifts and the integrity of the apostles. Philip is led to Gaza, far from Samaria, and there meets the Æthiopian Eunuch, who affords apparently the first instance of conversion effected, without miracle, by means of the Scriptures interpreted by a duly appointed minister. The written word of God and the ministry of the Priesthood are in the Divine economy united, and cannot safely be separated. The great bulk of mankind are neither capable of attaining knowledge without the aid of a living

guide and instructor, nor willing to attempt such labour. Moreover, those who learn from books alone wander much in difficulties and errors, and have often to retrace their steps; they are apt to cumber their memories with a chaotic mass of information, indigested materials without order or consistency, and therefore not ready for use: they become self-opinionated, and draw narrow conclusions, for want of free discussion and communication with other minds, and they are not aware of the allowances for times, persons, and circumstances, which are as necessary to be considered in the familiar intercourse of the world, as are the variations of the compass by the practical mariner. The lips of the priests should keep knowledge, preserve religion as an uniform system, and draw seasonable exhortation and instruction from received doctrines. Without their aid the Bible would be for the most part a sealed book, a dead letter. But, on the other hand, unless the Scriptures are in constant use, perpetually recurred to as the only standard of doctrine, the knowledge of the priests themselves will degenerate; the traditions of men will be substituted for the word of God; the clergy will exalt themselves instead of their Maker; tyranny will usurp the place of lawful govern-

ment, and the pure simplicity of the Gospel will be defaced by superstition and fanaticism. There are but too many occasions for observing the numerous evils which, at different times, flowed in upon Christendom from the neglect and disuse of the Bible. At present, we are called upon to notice the extreme veneration of the Jews for the written Word of God about the time of our Lord's advent, their scrupulous care in preserving the Scriptures entire, and what is perhaps still more extraordinary, their assiduity in translating them into the Greek or universal language. A brief recapitulation of particulars on this most important point will prove that it was not always thus. Moses had commanded the law to be read to the people in their solemn assembly every seventh year¹; but it appears this order was very imperfectly complied with, for as Moses predicted would be the case, the Israelites fell into idolatry. During the anarchical times of the Judges, the service of religion greatly degenerated among them, together with the knowledge of the Scriptures. Some of David's Psalms undoubtedly discover an intimate acquaintance with the book of Moses;

¹ Deut. xxxi.

but when that copy of it, which had been put into the ark of the covenant, was “found,” according to the significant phrase of the sacred historian¹, in the reign of good king Josiah, the contents were evidently, in some degree, novel, both to the monarch and his subjects. And this is the more remarkable, because the prophet Isaiah, nearly a century before, had appealed “to the law and to the testimony.” The prophets directing the expectation of the Jews to future events, fixed their attention upon the inspired writings; and the promises therein contained, afforded almost the only consolation left to a people separated from their brethren, despoiled by strangers of their country, their sacred city, and temple, and carried away captive by their enemies into a distant land. A second time the authority of Scripture was revived in a public and a formal manner², when, after the building of the second temple, and the reparation of the walls of Jerusalem, the people heard the law read with circumstances of great solemnity, and entered into a covenant with God, or rather renewed the engagement of their fathers, that they would obey the Divine commands, as the condition

¹ 2 Kings xxii.

² Nehem. viii.

of obtaining the Divine protection. Prophecy being then near the period of its cessation, the use of the Holy Scriptures was, by the ordinance of Providence, substituted for its living voice, during the four hundred years that intervened before the Messiah came. And thus the Jews, and even the Gentiles, were prepared to expect a great Deliverer "in the fulness of time." The custom of reading the law and the prophets in the synagogues is often alluded to in the New Testament: and our Lord and his apostles frequently took these occasions of explaining the Scriptures relating to Christ ¹. Their successors in the ministry have no authority for what they teach but the inspired writings; nor is it a light matter to expound them for the salvation of souls. The Æthiopian at once complies with the rite of baptism, a proof of his humility and sincerity, after having made his confession of faith to Philip, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Happy if the Church could always have retained the same simplicity in the form of Creeds! But the subtle ingenuity of mankind in evading obligations, and in altering their meaning by interpretations suited to the

¹ Luke iv. 16. Acts xiii. 15.

humour and interest, as well as to the conscience, of particular persons, has made it necessary to use precision and strictness in formularies of this kind. The bounds of Christian communities have been narrowed, not willingly, but advisedly and conscientiously, for the sake of preserving the essentials of Christian faith; lest indulgence might lead to laxity and doubt, and to a mixture of equivocal opinions upon points which, being of the utmost moment, should be determined with plain certainty. After societies differing from each other have accurately marked their differences, then comes in the healing office of Christian charity and moderation to prevent strife and intolerance.

The event next recorded is of the very greatest importance in the history of the Propagation of the Gospel, being the miraculous conversion of Saul the persecutor to Christianity. (A.D. 35.) Whatever of authority and respect has attached to the highest names among men in literature, science, philosophy, and legislation, in arts or arms, such and more is due from Christian missionaries to the Apostle Paul, who furnishes to them the best precepts in his writings, and the best example in his conduct, and who first de-

voted himself to spread over the world the faith of the Lord Jesus. What motive for undertaking this laborious and unpopular task, through continual suffering and privation, and at every worldly risk and loss, can possibly be assigned, except sincere conviction? And what but the truth could have wrought conviction in this great man, of a bold spirit and a mind strong and decisive by nature, well-educated, who retained his determination of purpose, and a cool self-possession under the most trying circumstances? Read his account of these in the burning words of Scripture¹: read his incomparable description of charity², his earnest and affectionate recommendations of the purest virtue scattered throughout all his writings, the conclusive vehemence of his reasonings to the Romans and the Galatians for the necessity of a Redeemer, his sublime and awful declarations of the world to come, which seem to flow out unconsciously in language from the fulness of his mind; and what heathen writer can you compare in energy to St. Paul? From whence does he derive the superiority of his eloquence, but

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 2 Cor. vi. and xi.

² 1 Cor. xii.

from that cause which is above all others sacred and important ? Others have had, and probably still have, as much sincerity, as much enthusiasm as Paul, devoting themselves with entire singleness of purpose to the service of Christ. But where shall we find in another instance, united to fixedness of principle, Paul's flexibility of manner, in adapting his addresses so as to suit all persons and all circumstances, with sound good sense and the keenest penetration ? He wins his way as the mariner shapes his deviating course with undeviating purpose, yielding, as yield he must, to the varieties of winds, and seas, and climates, but bearing always with one settled aim for the destined port. These qualities are heroic in the estimation of the world, while his humility and disinterestedness, springing from religious feeling, constitute the saint.

Furnished with natural endowments, beyond the ordinary race of men, and under the guidance of continued inspiration, this great apostle was yet supplied with peculiar advantages of education, and of regular appointment in the Church. A lesson to us, that as it is impiety to trust altogether to human means, so is it presumptuous to neglect them. Even St. Paul's Jewish parentage,

and the accident of his birth as a Roman citizen, were of use in the Divine councils towards the propagation of the Gospel.

After the immediate miracles, which caused Paul's conversion, and Ananias's reception of him, he is baptized in the usual course ; he retires for a time into Arabia, an interval, probably, of preparation for the ministry. At Damascus, first, " he preached Christ in the Synagogues, that he is the Son of God : " the Jews were amazed and incensed, and he escapes from their fury, being by night let down by the wall in a basket. At Jerusalem, the disciples were afraid to let him join them, from suspicion of his sincerity, until Barnabas vouched for him to the apostles. His zeal again brings him into jeopardy, and he is conveyed away to Tarsus ; for the time was not yet ripe for his ardent exertions, but a period of necessary repose and comfort was granted to the rising Church.

Again, by a double miracle, Cornelius is influenced to seek Peter, and Peter to baptize Cornelius, although a Gentile : and the wall of partition between the Jewish and the heathen Christians was thus for ever broken down, and an effectual opening made for bringing into operation the principle of preaching the Gospel

through the whole world to all nations. With God there is no respect of persons : under whatever form of religion men act with sincerity, uprightness and benevolence, God must be the author of these virtues, and must look with favour upon those who practise them. It is our business to remark, that as the law of Moses was framed, doubtless from wise, though in part, inscrutable purposes, for a single race and one family, the institution of the Gospel is as evidently universal, and we are commanded to use our endeavours to make it so.

Here appears the first schism in the Church : “ they that were of the circumcision contended with Peter,” being unable to conquer their prejudices against admitting the Gentiles to the same religious privileges with themselves. Perhaps the most inexplicable part of the Divine œconomy, is that by which the knowledge of the true God has been limited (expressly under the Mosaic, and actually under the Christian covenant) to comparatively few persons among the numbers which inhabit the earth. The blessings of civilization are restricted in the same manner, and in their most improved and flourishing state, exist only in Europe, or European settlements ;

they fluctuate also, like religious knowledge, and have periods of rising and falling. Sometimes an eclipse of dark ignorance covers an enlightened and humane people, from which they emerge again with difficulty, if at all. Even in countries where the greatest improvement and refinement prevail, a part of the same community is often found at a very low level, of brutal savage manners, and unsusceptible of the superior information diffused around them. Nevertheless, such information, religious and moral, it is the duty of those who wish well to their species, to spread, as widely as they can, and particularly where it seems most wanted. We are under a law of liberty, which, instead of circumscribing Divine revelation by numerous and strict rites, as in the case of the Jews, among the people to whom it was delivered, enjoins us to give it the greatest possible extension, by admitting converts with ease, and seeking for them. We are, indeed, to be on our guard to teach pure Christianity, unmixed with polytheism and idolatry, against which offences the Jewish institutions formed a barrier, while they contributed to give to heathens, as in the instance of Cornelius, an impression which led to true opinions in religion. Peter's statement convinced those who met at Jerusalem :

“ they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

“ The persecution that arose about Stephen,” was, as we have seen, controlled by Providence, to promote the diffusion of the Gospel ; and many preachers were, in consequence, scattered to distant parts. They first addressed themselves to Jews only, but at Antioch they spake to the Grecians, or, as some manuscripts have it, to the Greeks, and with great success. A question has arisen, whether the Gospel was then preached to idolaters. The civilized Gentiles were termed Greeks by the Jews. By “ the Grecians,” we are to understand such Gentiles, who, though not of the family of Israel, became proselytes to the Jewish religion, and submitted to circumcision ; and “ the worshipping” Gentiles, “ devout” men, “ who heard God,” were those who attended the service of the one living God in the Synagogues, without becoming proselytes by circumcision ¹. Some learned persons have supposed that the

¹ There is a learned note in favour of two sorts of proselytes, by Mr. Townsend ; New Testament Arranged, Vol. II. chap. x.—See the Appendix at the end of this book.

word "Grecians" denotes Jews by descent, who spoke the Greek language, from the circumstances of birth and residence, as St. Paul, who, however, takes care to assert his title to be called "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." It is remarkable, that this apostle is said to have disputed with "the Jews" at Damascus, and with "the Grecians" at Jerusalem. Perhaps out of Judea the word "Grecians" might be used in both the senses above-mentioned, and with considerable latitude in the provinces: and it is difficult to conceive that the distinction between devout and idolatrous Gentiles, would be very nicely observed, so as to exclude the latter, at Antioch, during "the whole year," that the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, (whom Barnabas went to seek at Tarsus,) assembled there "with the Church, and taught much people." At Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians, a proof that they had increased in numbers and public estimation, and that the distinction between them and the Jews had become marked and notorious. They immediately act in a manner worthy of the honourable name of Christians, by sending relief to their brethren in Judea, who were threatened with death, by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Probably no

parallel charity is recorded in profane history. We may here remark the accuracy of the sacred historian, in two particulars; in the account of the dearth, which Josephus also states to have afflicted Judea in the time of Claudius Cæsar; and in applying to Herod¹ the title of king, which he had only for about three years before his death, answering to the time of the persecution related in the 12th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, (A.D. 44.) There was no king at Jerusalem after Herod, and there had been none for thirty years before. In order to please the Jews, he put to death James, the brother of John, and imprisoned St. Peter; and not long afterwards, sitting in royal state at Cæsarea, which was half a Pagan city, and receiving from the people the impious salutation of a god, according to the Roman fashion, he was smitten by the Divine hand in judgment², and perished miserably, being eaten by worms. After his death, the Jews were probably restrained by the Roman authorities from persecuting the Christians, at least to extremity.

¹ Son of Aristobulus and Berenice, (daughter of Salome,) and grandson of Herod the Great and Mariamne.

² See Josephus, Antiq. XIX. 8.

After returning from their charitable mission to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas are appointed to the much weightier office of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, an undertaking then new to the world, and springing from the pure principles of Christianity. (A.D. 45.) Rather it may be termed the express work of God himself: for “the Holy Ghost said” to the prophets and teachers of Antioch, “separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” And yet it well becomes us to remark, that notwithstanding the Divine inspiration of these two eminent men, and this, their especial and extraordinary call, they receive a formal ordination and commission publicly, by authority from the Church. If the exercise of such authority was then necessary and expedient, much more so is it now (since miracles have ceased, and the Church is left like other societies to the guidance of human reason and polity), in order to prevent unqualified persons from intruding themselves unworthily into office, either as impostors from improper motives, or without any warrant but the delusions of their own fancy and presumptuous ignorance.

Barnabas and Saul, or Paul, attended by John,

sur-named Mark, sail to Cyprus, and having preached at the principal places in the island, proceed to Perga in Pamphylia. Here Mark leaves them, and returns to Jerusalem, not being satisfied in conscience, perhaps, about the lawfulness of preaching to the idolatrous Gentiles. The two apostles go on to Antioch in Pisidia, and having addressed themselves first of all to the Jews in the Synagogue, upon their rejecting the word of God, and shewing themselves unworthy of everlasting life, Barnabas and Paul boldly declare, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." They had previously converted Sergius Paulus, the Roman deputy in Cyprus, an idolater: and now, at Antioch, Paul plainly preaches the "Saviour, Jesus," by whom "all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses." The Jews finding their law thus disparaged and superseded, stir up a persecution against the Missionaries, which drives them to Iconium. There they abode "long time," speaking boldly in the Lord; but again the unbelieving Jews excited the Gentiles against them, and being unable to soften this malice, the apostles fled to Lystra and Derbe, and in these cities, and the region round about, "they preached the Gospel," undoubtedly

to idolaters. For in consequence of a miracle, performed at Lystra by Paul, the people prepare to offer a sacrifice to them as to gods. Paul's discourse upon this occasion is indeed more in the style of a Jewish than a Christian teacher ; he might think that a knowledge of the one living God was a necessary step to a belief in Christ. The apostles are still pursued by their Jewish enemies, and Paul is stoned, but providentially recovers from a state near death. He and Barnabas depart to Derbe, and having "preached the Gospel there, and taught many," they return upon their track to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "confirming the souls of the disciples." They are not discouraged by worldly opposition from continuing their pious labours, nor are they so vain of the possession of supernatural power and aid, as to neglect the means of worldly prudence, for they "ordained elders in every Church," thus providing a permanent establishment, in an orderly manner, for the religion they were introducing. A rare union of wisdom and zeal and disinterestedness, which qualities have scarcely been exhibited separately by the successors of the apostles in the same purity. This mission may have occupied about a year ; and one of its immediate consequences

was the bringing to an issue the question about the necessity of circumcision for Christian converts. This matter never seems to have excited the concern of the inhabitants of Antioch, among whom the Christians lived unmolested, until "certain men came down from Judea, and taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Even then there is no persecution, but after "no small dissention and disputation," Paul and Barnabas are sent with a deputation "to Jerusalem, unto the Apostles and elders about this question." The result of this first council of the Church is well known to have been that mild and healing decree, addressed to the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, by which they were released from the burdensome yoke of the Mosaic law, and only admonished to abstain from certain practices, shocking to Jewish prejudices. While an uniform authority was firmly exercised over the whole Church, they exhibited no tyranny, no intolerance; the Christian faith is preserved pure in essentials: and this decision is properly accompanied by a spirit of conciliation in things indifferent. The communication was joyfully accepted with the same good temper in which it was conceived. This memorable event

took place about the year 50 of the Christian era, but did not quiet the sullen obstinacy of the Jews in clinging to their fancied prerogatives. Their ill-will Peter was afraid to encounter at Antioch soon after, and dissembled his knowledge of the sound and better doctrine (which in Christ made no distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision) until Paul withstood and blamed him to his face. This finally settled the point, as far as we are informed ; no attempt was afterwards made to Judaize the evangelical Church, and there is a complete silence with regard to the Mosaical rites in the two General Epistles of St. Peter, written about ten and fifteen years after this error he committed at Antioch. We may remark that in this large and populous city, "the Queen of the East" as it is termed by Pliny, the infant Church found a place of refuge and security from the troubles with which it was elsewhere harassed. The Christians as yet had been persecuted only by the Jews, who could not exercise much power at Antioch, the capital of that Syrian Empire, whose kings had aimed at the subjugation of Jerusalem. The exploits by which the Asmonean or Maccabean princes gained renown, were, for the most part, performed in war against the Syrian kings, the descendants

of Seleucus, Alexander's general. This dynasty had, indeed, declined for more than a century before the Apostolic age ; and the Syrian kingdom, together with Egypt and Judea, and all the Macedonian conquests, had become absorbed in the mighty dominion of Rome. The Antiochian proselytes, who attended the Jewish worship, would, in all reasonable probability, favour the new doctrine, which abrogated the ceremonial law and circumcision ; and as the Romans, wherever they were masters, took care impartially to protect their dependents, under these circumstances, the preachers of the Gospel seem to have enjoyed greater freedom and safety at Antioch than in any other place. Thus Providence prepared for them an unexpected asylum.

Refreshed by an interval of comparative ease, and encouraged by his victory over Jewish superstitions, Paul is eager to resume his ministerial labours among the Gentiles. That master-spirit, which was destined to sway and influence the rising Church, could only find its proper sphere of action in spreading the faith of Christ. One untoward event, the contention between Barnabas and Paul, about Mark, seemed, and only seemed, to thwart the great object ; for, in reality,

the separation of these two apostles caused a wider diffusion of the Gospel. The relation of the difference between them is a proof that both they and the historian were alike actuated by honest sincerity, without the disguise and art which cling to imposture. And we may learn from this instance, that in cases of sharp contention, separation is better than unconscientious compliances and dissimulation ; is more likely to do good, by preserving among the parties, a mutual esteem and confidence in each other's principles, which may lead to reconciliation after temporary heats are past, and at all events, enable them to co-operate by their labours, though personally disunited, in one common cause. No selfish object mixed with their dispute, no motive of ambition, or revenge, or desire of aggrandizement,—the true causes of worldly quarrels, which make them a disease incurable, and contagious, and very injurious to mankind. Would that the Church had continued always exempt from such disgraceful and mischievous strife !

Barnabas sails for Cyprus, his native country ; and Paul proceeds overland through Syria and Cilicia, to the towns in which he had formerly preached the Gospel, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium.

(A.D. 53.) The apostle must have passed through his own city, Tarsus ; but no mention is made of it. At Lystra, Paul circumcised Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess, from motives of expediency, in order to satisfy the Jews in those parts, that he did not despise the law of his fathers, but thought it a school-master to bring men to Christ ; and with a view of inducing the Jews to associate with him, and listen more readily to the doctrines of the Gospel, instead of stirring up a persecution against him among the Gentiles. The measure appears to have been good policy, and to have succeeded, for we hear of no more animosity from those persons. Instead of the opposition he had before encountered, we are told, that “ the Churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily.” A year before, at Jerusalem, when the question of the necessity of circumcision was agitated, St. Paul would not subject Titus, “ being a Greek,” to this rite, because then compliance would have been giving up a principle. One of the nicest points of practical wisdom, is to know when and how much to yield. These two incidents, apparently contradictory, are probable, are consistent with the apostle’s character, and with the accounts in

his Epistles; and they are related in an unpremeditated, undesigning manner, the reverse of fabrication and imposture.

Paul had been accompanied from Antioch by Silas, who had been chosen, together with Judas, (being both distinguished prophets and preachers) to deliver the decree of the elders at Jerusalem; and he now takes Timothy with them. The Holy Ghost, their constant guide, suffers them not to execute their purpose of going into Bithynia; but Paul is warned by a vision in the night, to proceed to Macedonia. This is the first intimation that St. Luke, the writer of the narrative, was in their company, by the modest use of the first person plural, “after loosing from Troas, *we* came with a straight course to Samothracia, and from thence to Philippi.” The reader will observe, that, on account of the number of persons intimately concerned in this missionary journey, any falsehood in the narrative of facts must have been easily detected; particularly as the parties joined at different places, and had no opportunity of previous concert. The Lord opens the heart of the devout Lydia, so that she becomes a convert to the Christian faith; but in consequence of Paul’s expelling from a

damsel a spirit of divination, which had brought much gain, he and Silas are beaten and imprisoned at Philippi. This, it appears, was the first persecution by heathen magistrates, unexcited by the Jews. At midnight, the prisoners are miraculously released; and the jailor is converted, and baptized with his household. Paul insists upon an honourable dismissal, upon the ground of his privilege as a Roman citizen. They then proceed to Thessalonica, and preach Christ in the Synagogue, and make many converts, particularly among the "devout Greeks;" but some of the Jews stirred up persecution against them, as persons "who turned the world upside down." They escape by night to Berea, the people of which place have obtained for ever a noble character, because they searched the Scriptures to find the truth of the Christian doctrine. The Jewish persecutors follow, and Paul is conveyed alone to Athens. While he waits in that city for Silas and Timotheus, his spirit was moved by the idolatry round him, and he makes that admirable speech in the midst of Mars' Hill, which, the more it is considered, will appear the more suited to the occasion. Our thoughts are transported back to an earlier period, to the times of Pericles, Socrates, Plato, and Demosthenes, and

we are led to contrast with these celebrated names, the Christian teacher, more bold, more wise, and more eloquent than they. The real philosophers would, we might suppose, have been willing listeners to one who taught the knowledge of those sublime truths, the existence of one invisible God, Creator and Lord of the universe, and the righteous judgment he has ordained for men after their resurrection from the dead. We may remark, with pleasure, that Paul had a free hearing, either because liberty was not yet extinct at Athens, or because the restless, inquisitive temper of the Greeks made them fond of novelties. Some converts were made at Athens before St. Paul's departure to Corinth, in which town he worked for his subsistence as a tent-maker. Sweet and honourable is the bread of independent and industrious labour. The Apostle was not unmindful of his great business, but "reasoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both the Jews and the Greeks." Being joined by Silas and Timotheus, he remained at Corinth a year and six months; and his words seem to have made great impressions, particularly among the Gentiles. Some of the opposing Jews, as usual, troubled him, and brought him to the judgment-seat of Gallio, the

deputy-governor of Achaia, who dismissed the complaint. He was elder brother to the celebrated Seneca, and viewed the contentions of Jews and Christians with an indifference more defensible, on the ground of an easy temper, than of philosophy properly so called.

Paul's residence at Corinth was a very memorable æra, because he then wrote his two letters to the Thessalonians, the earliest Scriptures of the New Testament, excepting the Gospel by St. Matthew. (A.D. 55.) The facts agree exactly with the story of St. Luke, in the Acts; and the two accounts elucidate and confirm each other, by mutually supplying omissions, and by minute coincidences without design. Our business is to remark the affectionate watchfulness of St. Paul over this infant Church, the assiduous and anxious tenderness with which he comforted them, "as a nurse cherisheth her children;" for besides his first labours in person, he twice endeavoured to revisit them, notwithstanding the danger, and being prevented, sent Timothy from Athens to establish them. He then writes these two Epistles, which bear marks of inspiration; for we shall find their substance and tone superior to other compositions, if we

consider the sublime opening in which the Lord Jesus Christ is mysteriously joined with God the Father, their awful strain of pure morality, and the exhortations in which the gentleness and earnestness of the human teacher are strangely mingled with a Divine authority. From some passages in the first Epistle, the Thessalonians had inferred, that the coming of Christ and the final judgment would soon take place ; and the second Epistle was written chiefly with the design of correcting this misapprehension.

Paul now departs for Ephesus, on his way to keep the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem, having first shorn his head, in consequence of a vow. But what, we may ask, had the apostle of Christ to do with the Jewish vow of a Nazarite ¹, and with the feast of the Passover ? Are not these “ the weak and beggarly elements,” mentioned in his Epistle to the Galatians ? The general character of St. Paul, and the absence of all interested motives, forbid us to charge him with duplicity ; and if his example appears inconsistent with his own principles and exhortations in this instance, his conduct may be accounted

¹ Numbers, chap. vi.

for on the ground of old religious habits, and attachment to his nation, and because he felt it a duty to soften his Jewish brethren by all possible compliances with their customs.

No particular circumstances are related of this journey. Paul received no molestation from the Jews at Jerusalem upon this occasion; and after visiting Antioch, and the Churches in Phrygia and Galatia, he returned again to Ephesus, and remained there two years. Aquila and his wife Priscilla, Paul's old companions, had obtained, during his absence, an unexpected coadjutor in Apollos, an eloquent Jew, and "mighty in the Scriptures." He passed afterwards to Corinth, and "mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ." Nevertheless, the apostle seems to have been wanted, for some of the disciples at Ephesus had only John's baptism. After some instruction, they were baptized by Paul in the name of the Lord Jesus, and, by the imposition of his hands, received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. He himself was at this period in great power, being enabled to work "special miracles." Gradually he was more and more strengthened and enlightened in his ministry, and since his

late visit to Jerusalem, became, probably, convinced that conciliation was thrown away upon the great body of the Jews: for from this time, we hear of no more gratuitous compliances on his part with the Mosaic ritual, and the hatred of that nation grew more bitter and deadly against him.

The Gospel spread rapidly at Ephesus in consequence of Paul's preaching and the miracles wrought by him. The sons of Sceva are punished for attempting to adjure evil spirits "by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth:" the costly books of magical art are burnt voluntarily: and a great tumult arises in the city on the part of the idolaters and makers of silver shrines, who feared lest the worship of the "great goddess Diana" should be brought to nought by the efforts of this single, unknown, indigent preacher, "persuading the people that they are no gods which are made with hands." The Jews, by their religion, were as opposed to idolatry as the Christians; but it seems they lived domesticated throughout the countries bordering the Mediterranean, not molested themselves on this subject, and not molesting others. Some effect, no doubt, was produced by the example of their simple

religious rites, and by the sublime doctrine of one invisible Godhead : but often the Jews were despised and ridiculed for the singularity of their creed, and their visionary worship. One man, possessing neither power, influence, nor authority, with no means beyond his Divine commission, is able to shake the credit of the idolatrous religion in one of its chief strong holds. The result is great beyond all proportion to the weakness of the instrument, and is itself a proof that Paul was under Divine guidance. It is also remarkable, and an evidence that he had conducted himself with prudence as well as zeal, that the civil authorities appear to have been favourably inclined towards him, and sheltered him from the Jews and from popular violence. But upon the whole there is no pretence here for ascribing what happened to merely secondary causes, for the finger of God is manifest.

During St. Paul's long sojourn at Ephesus, he wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians ; and probably that to the Galatians was written about the same time, or soon after his departure from Ephesus. The expressions in both concerning circumcision have a great resemblance, and shew

the same train of thought¹." The energy, the vehemence, the fire of this First Epistle to the Corinthians, joined with minute but incidental notices of persons and facts, must strike every reader with a conviction that this is no fiction, but reality. With what sublime simplicity does the apostle enforce the fundamental doctrines of faith in Christ crucified, and of the certainty of a resurrection of the dead! With what decisive authority does he reprove the Corinthians for their contentions and sensuality! These noble sentiments are singularly contrasted with the misery of his condition, for he is, and describes himself to be, labouring with his own hands for his daily bread, an object of hatred to his brethren, the Jews, exposed to popular fury, "fighting with beasts,"—"standing in jeopardy every hour." These perpetual troubles and vexations seem no more to discompose him than if he was relating what had happened long ago. This preacher, who, in exhorting, is all animation, gives the unequalled description of Christian charity; and exhibits in his own person a pattern of meekness, according to that touching passage in the fourth chapter, "being reviled we

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 19. and Gal. vi. 15.

bless, being persecuted we suffer it ;” and an exemplary patience becoming a disciple of him, “in whose mouth were no reproofs.” If the harmonious union of qualities so dissimilar in this composition be not the work of inspiration, let any thing like it be shewn in the heathen world.

After the tumult at Ephesus, Paul found it expedient to leave the place ; and it appears he made a circuit through Macedonia to Illyricum, and came into Greece, “where he abode three months.” In order to avoid the Jews, “who laid wait for him,” he did not go straight to Jerusalem, but returned back into Macedonia. Before he came into Greece he wrote the second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which the account of the apostle’s sufferings accurately corresponds with St. Luke’s narrative in the Acts. Yet, at this moment of extreme trial, his expressions are, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ;” and “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” The apostle, having the testimony of a good conscience, bears his troubles with patience, even with joy and triumph ; and glories in his

afflictions for Christ's sake, as evident marks of his Divine commission. This is natural enough, where there is deep-seated principle; but the sentiments form a striking contrast to the unsupportable agony of the blessed Jesus, who was not charged with any sin even by the betrayer; and he must have had intimate opportunities of discovering his Master's failings, and for the ease of his own conscience, would have been glad to have divulged them. Why then should the spirit of our Lord have been cast down as by an overwhelming weight, precisely under those circumstances which kindled ardour and courage in his faithful ministers? St. Paul answers this question, in explaining, that "Christ gave himself for us; that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;" and in the fifth chapter of this Second Epistle to the Corinthians "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." On the other hand, the consolation felt by the apostle and his companions, by which "their inward man was renewed day by day," marks the fulfilment of our Lord's promise of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Their minds appear to have been constantly impressed with that awful truth, now for the first time

plainly declared, "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The first letter had produced a good effect and some reformation among the Corinthians, as we gather from the softer tone of this second, and from the tender treatment herein recommended towards that guilty person, before so sharply reprobated, but who had exhibited tokens of repentance. Still the sagacity of the writer leads him to fear a relapse on the part of the Corinthians, and accordingly he holds high his apostolic power, and urges on them the constant practice of the duties of Christian virtue. Paul now leaves Greece, or Corinth, to repair again to Macedonia.

Many of the brethren waited for him at Troas; and he sailed thither from Philippi, St. Luke it appears being with him. After remaining a few days at Troas they came by sea, stopping at different places along the coast, to Miletus. St. Paul sends for the elders of the Ephesian Church, and makes to them a brief but very powerful exhortation, and bids them farewell, being resolved to go to Jerusalem. The apostle was perhaps never

reduced so low, driven about the world from enemies to enemies, sometimes imprisoned, sometimes beaten, sometimes banished by the Gentiles, and laid in wait for by the Jews, that they might kill him. In this distressed condition his honest boast is, that he was burdensome to no man for his maintenance. He seems to have no care about himself, except not to throw away his life. And his life receives its value, in his estimation, from his being a chosen appointed instrument for extending the Gospel: for "he was willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord¹." His solicitude is to perform the work of his ministry, and to watch over the new Churches now thickly planted. We may remark, that notwithstanding his afflictions, and some infirmities, and though "he was weak in bodily presence," he never loses his authority with the brethren and disciples among whom he lived in intimate society. They did not desert him in this extremity; and the elders of Ephesus receive his parting injunctions with veneration and respect, "sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." If there had

¹ 2 Cor. v. 8.

been any imposition, or subterfuge, or any flaw in St. Paul's character, those who were his constant companions could not have obeyed him with the deference they did ; particularly as he held out no prospect of amendment in the temporal condition of the ministers of the Gospel. They were taught to expect nothing but that wretchedness which Paul himself, and a greater than Paul, had previously suffered, through poverty, imprisonment, ignominy, and death. The reward proposed belonged to another world, and was to be dispensed at the judgment-seat of Christ. Under these circumstances Paul's daily companions could not have believed that he performed miracles, and have put them on record, unless this had really been the case. Farther, let any one read carefully the Acts of the Apostles, and consider the impression made on his mind by the delineation of Paul's character there given by St. Luke ; and then judge for himself, after a deliberate perusal, whether the letters purporting to be the apostle's composition, correspond to that character. It is not a common one, nor are the circumstances in which Paul was engaged those of ordinary life ; yet there is very conclusive internal evidence that the compositions are genuine, because they suit, and are

consistent with the description given of the temper, manners, and principles of him who is said to be their author. The Epistles of Peter, James, and John, belong to other casts of character. The events also related in the history agree in substance and time with certain expressions scattered through St. Paul's Epistles : for instance, the growing alienation of the apostle from Judaism, and the encreasing exasperation of the Jews, as a body, against him, are facts which reciprocally explain and account for each other with probability. He who a few years before "circumcised Timothy because of the Jews," now declares to the Galatians, "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." And we find in the part of the Acts we have just been considering, that "the disciples came together to break bread on the first day of the week," a custom which implies a renunciation of the Jewish Sabbath. On the other hand, the hatred of the Jewish nation is more and more inflamed against one whom they must have looked upon as a mischievous and dangerous apostate. Hence their desire to cut him off; and hence arose the scenes of violence at Ephesus, and those still worse, which we shall soon have to recount, at Jerusalem.

Indeed, there is no ostensible reason why St. Paul should have made this his fifth visit to that city. Three years after his conversion he "went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days ¹;" a second time, after an interval of about four years ², from Antioch, with relief of money; a third time ³, from Antioch, after another interval of seven years, about the great question of circumcision; a fourth time ⁴, from Ephesus, to keep the Passover. And now he makes this voyage from Miletus, about A.D. 58, twenty-two years having elapsed since his conversion, and goes, as he says himself, "bound in the spirit, hastening if it were possible to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." But he seems to have had no personal motive for his journey; on the contrary, many prophetic warnings were held out to him of the extreme danger he was incurring, of which he himself was fully aware. "What mean ye, he says to the disciples, dissuading him from proceeding, to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." He goes con-

¹ Gal. i. 18.

² Acts xi. 30.

³ Gal. ii. 1.

⁴ Acts xviii. 21, 22.

strained by a sense of duty, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, which controlled, strengthened and preserved him for the service of Christ. By this continual communication between the great apostle of the Gentiles and the brethren at Jerusalem, the unity of the Church was established, together with the true spirit of the Gospel. Those who lived in Judea were prevented from Judaizing too much by the counteracting force of the Gentile converts; and it could not be pretended that the Christianity preached by the missionaries in the provinces was a different religion from that established by Peter, and James, and John, at home. It is, indeed, remarkable that Paul, now between fifty and sixty years old, should tell the Ephesians that they should see him no more, particularly as he had before said, "after I have been at Jerusalem I must also see Rome:" on which proposed journey he might easily have taken Ephesus in his way. As these intimations were fulfilled, out of the probable course of events, we must consider them as prophecies of Divine inspiration.

St. Luke relates, "the brethren at Jerusalem received us gladly;" but yet they were well aware of the animosity excited against Paul, and were

afraid of the consequences to him, should any disturbance arise in the city, now thronged with strangers on the occasion of the religious festival. James and the elders hear Paul's report "what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry;" no difference of opinion takes place: on the contrary, the old decree, by which the necessity of circumcision to Christians was done away, is repeated and ratified. But to avoid tumult, and to appease, if possible, the Jews, Paul is recommended to join four persons in a ceremony of purification, according to the customs of the law of Moses; as on his last visit to Jerusalem, he had done voluntarily, and it appears successfully. But this time, the attempt at conciliation fails. "The Jews of Asia," with great clamour, stir up the people, and lay hands on Paul; and he would have been killed, but for the interposition of the Roman garrison. His great offence, in the sight of the Jews, was the admission of the Gentiles to equal privileges in religion without circumcision. They listened patiently and attentively to the account of his miraculous conversion, and heard with complacency of a new prophet of their nation, Jesus, and were, it should seem, disposed to believe that he was inspired and holy, the Just One, or

even the Messiah. Such pretensions rather added to the dignity and consequence of the whole Jewish people, and were very compatible with the prophecies of their Scriptures, and the general expectations. The multitude also, acted upon by casual impulses, and therefore fickle, might now consider the crucifixion of Jesus a cruel injustice, and lay the blame of that transaction, as is usually the case, upon their rulers. But not one Jew, probably, of that assembly, whom Paul addressed as "men, brethren, and fathers," but was indignant at the apostle's supposed pollution of the temple, by bringing Gentiles into it, and at his renunciation of the customs of the law of Moses. If we make a comparison between that address and St. Stephen's, in the 7th chapter of the Acts, it will appear that the cause of Christianity had silently gained ground, in the course of a quarter of a century, in the heart of Judea. The Christian Church¹ at Jerusalem, seems to have preserved an outward conformity with the rites and usages of the Mosaic law; under the name of Nazarenes, they passed for one of the numerous sects of the Jews, both among Jews and Gentiles, and were

¹ Eusebius, B. IV. c. 5. Sulpitius Severus, lib. II. c. 31.

protected by their obscurity, and by the Roman power. Among themselves they cherished the pure faith of the Gospel, which was openly taught by Paul and other ministers in the Gentile world ; and by Judaizing in some indifferent matters they stopped persecution in Judea, and gradually won over converts among their own nation.

· We may also here remark the extraordinary courage of Paul, which enabled him, even at the moment he was about to be torn in pieces by a clamorous and infuriated multitude, to retain a cool self-possession, and discretion, which extricated him from the danger. He resolutely enforces his privileges, as a Roman citizen ; and before the Jewish council, or Sanhedrim, finding that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, by a bold and opportune statement of his Christian belief in “ the hope and the resurrection of the dead,” he interests the Pharisees on his side. Instances there have been, of orators of the greatest celebrity, who, from sudden fear, have been deprived of all their address and powers of elocution. The apostle, as we have before seen, was, from strong principle, regardless of personal consequences in the faithful discharge of his ministry ; and under Divine

guidance adopted that course of action which eventually led, most surely, to the establishment and propagation of the Gospel by his own exertions. His enemies were more and more provoked by his escape, and "bound themselves," to the number of forty, "under a curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had slain Paul." He dexterously throws himself upon the protection of the Roman captain, who sends him, under a strong guard of soldiers, to Cæsarea, a town upon the sea-side, above sixty miles from Jerusalem. His Jewish accusers soon follow, and make complaints against him before Felix the Roman governor, on charges of sedition, heresy, and profanation. Paul distinctly refutes these accusations, and vindicates himself with that happy and most rare union of principle and prudence, by which he was enabled, under very disadvantageous and untoward circumstances to advance his cause, avoiding mistakes of irritation and intemperance on the one hand, and of improper concessions on the other. He uses no dissimulation, offers no excuses, no supplications for mercy; but as his defence was well adapted to clear himself of the Roman law, which forbade the introduction of new objects of worship, the second address was so justly aimed at the worldly

character of his judge, that as this Christian minister, in bonds, reasoned before him of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." From unworthy motives he detained Paul a prisoner, often sending for and communing with him. And thus he remained for two years, under such easy guard, his acquaintance having access to him, that as his seizure was a rescue, so his prison may be termed a castle of defence against the enraged Jews.

It might have been supposed that Paul would employ this interval of leisure in writing, but that was not the case ; none of his Epistles are ascribed to this date. On the contrary, they appear generally to have been written at periods when the author was in the midst of urgent business and troubles. Yet in the style of composition they bear few marks of hurry or confusion, or personal vexation ; such was the healthy vigour of Paul's mind, that the agitation of daily affairs did not alter the expression of his opinions, nor cloud and disturb his thoughts upon important points of religion ; but the activity of his life rather gave energy to his pen.

Paul found a resting place, where it might least have been expected, at Cæsarea ; and, under

Divine guidance, he so behaved, that during his long sojourn there, he seems to have gained favour with the Roman authorities; and that influence must imperceptibly have advanced the cause of Christianity.

It is farther to be remarked, that the worldly-minded governor, Felix, had married Drusilla, professedly a Jewess, daughter of king Herod Agrippa; and her brother, king Agrippa, and her sister, Bernice, arrived at Cæsarea, to salute Festus, the new Roman governor, at the time Paul was brought before his tribunal. We have repeatedly had occasion to observe, that the policy of the Herodian family uniformly turned upon cultivating the good-will and favour of the person, or persons, in chief authority at Rome; to attain this object, notwithstanding the alliance of Herod the Great with the Asmonean family, they almost sacrificed their religion, introducing Pagan customs, and offering honours, little short of divine, to the statues of the emperors, freely in some of the cities of Judea, and as much as they dared at Jerusalem, to the great and indignant disgust of true Jews¹. Herod Agrippa was

¹ Josephus, Antiq. B. XVIII.

indebted for his crown to the partiality of the emperor Caius Caligula; and though, in one instance, a persecutor of the Christians, he is represented by Josephus¹ of a mild and liberal disposition, and a favourite with the Jews. His son Agrippa, before whom St. Paul pleaded, following the courtly policy of his ancestors, ingratiated himself with the emperor Claudius², and also with his successor, Nero, who had now reigned about six years. (A.D. 60.)

What causes, it may be asked, induced the son Agrippa to favour St. Paul, adopting a course the reverse of that pursued by his father, who, yielding to the malice of the Jews, put St. James to death. In answer to this question, it may be stated, that the father had, by his Jewish partialities, become unpopular among the heathen, and even his own soldiery; that Festus, the new Roman governor, was a man superior to his predecessor Felix, of a more upright and resolute character, as appears from his statement of Paul's case³. Add to this, the apostle's eloquent speech in his own defence, though, from the account of his miraculous conversion, Festus thought him mad,

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. XIX. c. 7.

² B. XX. c. 7, 8.

³ Acts xxv. Joseph. Antiq. B. XX. c. 8.

was calculated to produce a real effect upon Agrippa, and “almost to persuade him to be a Christian,” by a reference to the sacred promises and the prophets: and both Festus and Agrippa must have gladly seen a new sect springing up among the Jews, of a moderate and peaceable character, which, instead of making religion a pretence for rebellion, inculcated obedience and the payment of tribute to the actual government, as a matter of duty. Agrippa, whose family had continually been aggrandized by Roman connections, would be the last person to object to an appeal from Paul to the emperor in person; and this exercise of his privilege, as a Roman citizen, proved sufficiently that the apostle, in his teaching, favoured the temporal authority from which he sought protection. It is obvious, that there could be no forgery or imposture in the account of transactions, which took place in the presence of large assemblies of Jews and Gentiles, before public tribunals, and the highest officers of state; nor could any proceeding have been more calculated to make known the principles of Christianity, and with a favourable impression, throughout the whole empire.

It may be proper here briefly to review the

circumstances of the state of Judea about this time, which all foreboded that storm of calamity, now impending, and soon to fall upon the devoted nation, as we think, in execution of the Divine judgments previously denounced upon their sins. From the time that Pompey first reduced Judea to a Roman province, the conquerors and the conquered never cordially agreed; the Jews, unlike any other people, unanimously opposing all introduction of idolatrous customs, and many zealots among them considering the Roman taxes and tribute as contrary to the law of their religion. Still the public peace was tolerably preserved until after the death of Tiberius, chiefly it appears in consequence of the dexterity and ability of the race of Herod. During the reign of that emperor, the Jews, who had settled at Rome, were banished, to the number of some thousands¹, in consequence of a disgraceful occurrence of private debauchery and superstition; but this persecution extended not to Judea, the calamity falling on the Jews resident at Rome, together with the Egyptians, in consequence, perhaps, of some political intrigues, or of the aversion enter-

¹ Joseph. B. XVIII. c. 3.

tained by the citizens, especially in times of famine, against foreigners. Caligula provoked a more serious hostility, by commanding his statue to be erected in the temple¹ at Jerusalem. The emperors had, with wise policy, early assumed the important office of Supreme Pontiff, thus uniting in their own persons the highest authority, civil and religious, in the state; to this solid power the servile senate, following the example of the Asiatic world, added the impious honour of deification. Augustus and Tiberius received this homage with discretion and reserve from the heathens; but the mad Caligula determined to enforce it from the Jews, notwithstanding the persuasions of his friend Agrippa, and the prudent remonstrances of the Roman governor of Syria, Petronius. About the same time, a violent and bloody commotion arose at Alexandria, between the Jews and other inhabitants, who wished to deprive them of their ancient privileges as citizens. Each party sent a deputation to exculpate themselves before the emperor; and Philo, who was one of the Jewish ambassadors, has left a curious account of their ridiculous reception by Caligula, who ran from

¹ Joseph. B. XVIII. c. 8. Tacitus, Hist. 5.

room to room, asking unconnected questions, and finally dismissed them, saying, "These people are not wicked but foolish, who cannot believe I am a god."

After the assassination of Caligula, which can hardly be called a murder, the senate had a short dream of liberty ; but the voices of the soldiery prevailed to appoint Caligula's uncle, the stupid Claudius, to the throne. Upon this occasion king Herod Agrippa, being by good fortune at Rome, performed essential service in producing an accommodation between the emperor and the senate ; and Claudius shewed his gratitude by indulgent decrees in favour of the Jews, first at Alexandria, and then throughout the whole empire, confirming to them the free exercise of their religion¹. A.D. 41. Herod the Great, in his policy of depressing the consequence of the Asmonean family, had introduced the custom of displacing the high priest, and appointing a successor of obscure parentage, by his own royal authority ; this power of removing and re-appointing the high priest, Agrippa Herod exercised very freely, the Jews yielding to his

¹ Josephus Antiq. B. XIX. c. 5. 7. 9.

will, on account of his known attachment to their religion, and his influence with the emperor. These very circumstances contributed to excite the jealousy of the Roman governor, or president of Syria, Marcus, and the ill-will of the Roman soldiery ; their animosities, together with that of the heathen inhabitants of Cæsarea and Sebaste, broke out, upon Agrippa's death, in gross contumelies against his memory.

His son Agrippa was then (A.D. 44.) only in his seventeenth year, too young to govern his distracted country ; but he obtained some advantages for the Jews, from the favour of the emperor, with whom he resided at Rome. Some insurrections took place in Judea, which were not quelled without bloodshed ; a famine prevailed ; and to add to the miseries of the people, a tumult arose at Jerusalem, at the celebration of the Passover, in consequence of an insult offered by a Roman soldier, who indecently exposed his person, during the religious ceremony. In the confusion occasioned by the approach of the military, twenty thousand persons were crushed to death, says Josephus¹, in the city. Out of

¹ Antiq. B. XX. c. 5.

this commotion arose another : some Jews, engaged in the first tumult, robbed a servant of the emperor, travelling not far from Jerusalem ; the governor, as a punishment, gave orders for plundering the neighbouring villages, and apprehending some of the principal inhabitants ; and in the execution of these commands, a Roman soldier having seized a copy of the law of Moses, publicly tore it in pieces, with much scurrilous language.

A quarrel arose between ¹ the Samaritans and the Galilæans, who, on their journeys to Jerusalem, at the religious festivals, necessarily passed through Samaria. There was much recrimination on the cause of the mutual attacks which took place on these occasions ; bribes prevailed on the Roman procurator, Cumanus, to decide in favour of the Samaritans. The case was then brought before Ummidius Quadratus, prefect of Syria, who had some of the Jews, accused of revolt against the Roman power, crucified ; but sent the principal parties in the dispute to Rome, to plead before the emperor in person. Claudius, swayed by Agrippa, decided to put the ringleaders of the Samaritans to death, as authors of the disturbances, and banished Cumanus ; in his

¹ Antiq. B. XX. c. 7.

room he appointed Felix, brother of his freed slave and favourite, Pallas. (A.D. 51.) About the same time, all Jews were commanded to leave Rome, Suetonius ¹ states, “on account of their tumultuous conduct, to which Christ incited them;” this refers, probably, to some disturbance between the Jews and the Christians.

During the nine years of Felix’ administration in Judea, the affairs of that unhappy country, by a fatal decline, grew worse and worse. Soon after the death of Herod the Great, “ten thousand disorders²,” in the emphatic language of Josephus, broke out; particularly bands of robbers, under bold leaders, sometimes old soldiers, infested the country. In other instances, magicians, or pretended prophets, decoyed multitudes into desert places, keeping them in a state of insurrection; the names of some of these seditious impostors, as Theudas ³ and Judas of Galilee, are mentioned both by Josephus and the sacred writers. Felix exerted a vigorous authority against the insurgents; but soon shewed the cruelty and rapacity of a servile disposition.

¹ Acts xviii. 2. Suetonius, Claudius 25.

² Antiq. B. XVII. c. 10.

³ Acts v. 36, 37. Joseph Antiq. XX. c. 5. and XVIII. c. 1.

Three years after his appointment, the emperor Claudius was poisoned by his wife and niece, Agrippina, who thus opened the way to the throne for her own son Nero. Such horrible examples are contagious ; and Felix, having been expostulated with, for his mal-administration, by Jonathan, the high priest¹, treacherously hired murderers, who, pretending to mingle with the worshippers in the temple, stabbed the good old man while officiating. This action was the more atrocious because Jonathan had been very instrumental in persuading the emperor to make Felix procurator, and because Felix suborned, by bribes, one of Jonathan's most intimate friends, to lead on the perpetrators of this barbarous sacrilege. The murder being never avenged, (for it was planned by him whose office it was to bring offenders to justice) the ruffians continued to mix among the people with concealed weapons, and slew, with impunity, their enemies, or the enemies of other men, for money ; according to the manner of their countrymen, who, in Mahometan times, afterwards, were called assassins. Of this diabolical set were, probably, the forty who bound themselves by an oath to kill Paul. They even

¹ Antiq. B. XX. c. 8.

committed murders in the temple without compunction; Josephus ¹ states solemnly his opinion, that, on account of such wickedness, God rejected the city, and deserted the temple, and moreover, “brought the Romans upon us, and fire upon the city to purge it, and brought upon us, our wives and children, slavery, as desirous to make us wiser by calamities.”

Thus is Josephus, like another Balaam, involuntarily and unconsciously compelled to bear testimony to Divine truth, in recording the fulfilment of our blessed Saviour's prophecies concerning the calamities hanging over Jerusalem and the Jews, and about to be more fully completed, as a judicial punishment for the sin of the nation, in rejecting and crucifying the Messiah. False prophets also arose, particularly that Egyptian ², who got together a large band of sicarii, or assassins, near Jerusalem; but they were promptly attacked, routed, and destroyed, by Felix, at the head of his army. Paul was himself at first mistaken, by the Roman officer, for this very man, who had escaped the general slaughter of his

¹ Antiq. B. XX. c. 8. § 4.

² Acts xxi. 38. Joseph. Antiq. XX. c. 9.

sedition followers. It is, indeed, probable, that some upright and pious Jews might have wished, and hoped, to achieve a deliverance for their countrymen, after the example of the Maccabees, in resisting the profane tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes; but the times were very different. Under the Romans, the Jewish religion was insulted only by individuals of the baser sort, but received protection from the government, as long as the nation abstained from tumult and revolt. The national character also had degenerated, a plain and decisive proof of which is afforded by the misconduct¹ of the high priests themselves, who quarrelled and fought in the streets of Jerusalem, with the principal citizens, and seized by violence the tithes due to the inferior priests, so that many of these latter died for want. History does not present such a complication of disorders and calamities in the interior of any other state; particularly it is to be considered that the rest of the world, except Judea, continued generally at peace, and that the Romans had both the disposition and the means to enforce obedience to their rule, which was, upon the whole, salutary, and conducted with purposes of justice.

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. XX. c. 9.

In the midst of the disastrous confusion of their affairs, the Jews, having lost confidence in their own governors, civil and religious, still adhered to their religion conscientiously, but with a zeal doubly blind and mistaken, which turned their sincerity into obstinacy; for they, at the same time, rejected the true deliverance, a spiritual deliverance, proposed and pointed out in their Scriptures, and fixed their hopes upon being rescued from the yoke of the Roman government, which was not in itself hard to bear, and which it was their duty to have obeyed. By a fatality unexampled, and such as can only be resolved into the inscrutable decrees of him who governs the world, they misinterpreted the prophecies to their own destruction, and were, at the same time, goaded on by the attacks of the heathen soldiery and populace, to acts of rebellion, which ended in their being driven from their country, and dispersed throughout the world.

The beginning of the conflict, which had been long impending, may be ascribed to an affray which took place at Cæsarea¹, between the

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. XX. c. 8. § 7; and Wars, B. II. c. 13. § 7.

Jewish and Syrian residents, concerning their equal right to the privileges of citizenship ; a dispute of the same kind with that which had previously occurred at Alexandria. The Jews claimed the pre-eminence, because Herod their king was the builder of Cæsarea, himself a Jew. On the other hand, the Syrians, or Græco-Syrians, contended that Herod, by erecting statues and temples, marked this out for a heathen city. The parties came to arms ; the Jews, being the stronger and the more wealthy, had the better, although the heathen were assisted by the garrison, composed of neighbouring Syrians. Felix came promptly with an armed force upon the combatants, and as the Jews would not desist upon his remonstrance, he slew many of them, and permitted his soldiers to plunder some of their houses.

Upon the recal of Felix, the principal Jews of Cæsarea sent a deputation to Rome, to accuse him before the emperor Nero : but the interest of his brother, Pallas, sheltered the governor from their charges. What was worse, the Syrian party, by large gifts, prevailed on Burrhus, Nero's tutor and secretary, to obtain an imperial decree, which deprived the Jewish citizens of Cæsarea of their equal privileges. Thus their animosity

was kindled afresh, and after smouldering for some time in discontent, broke out in fierce war.

Such was the disorderly state of affairs, which the new procurator, Festus, by his integrity and firmness, was well qualified to correct and improve; but death too soon terminated his administration. King Agrippa having added to the palace at Jerusalem a new dining-room, which overlooked the temple, the priests raised a wall to shut out an intrusion, not only unpleasant, but in their opinion sacrilegious. Festus, taking part with Agrippa, wished to demolish the wall; but an appeal being carried to Rome, the priesthood gained their point, through the influence of the empress Poppea, whom Josephus terms a religious woman. Agrippa took advantage of the absence of the high priest, at Rome, to depose him, and appoint another to that office, named Joseph; and after Festus' death, he removed Joseph, and chose Ananus, or Annas, of the rigorous sect of the Sadducees. This Annas put to death James, surnamed the Just, the brother, or cousin, of our Lord, and other Christians; but this act of severity was unpopular, and some of the chief citizens sent a deputation to meet the new procurator, Albinus, with complaints of Annas, and he was deposed from his

dignified office, after holding it only three months ¹.

In the midst of the stormy troubles of the country, Christianity was preserved, like the ark through the deluge. We read in Eusebius², who quotes older and cotemporary writers, that the murders of the first and second James produced an effect quite contrary to what their persecutors designed; the exemplary characters of these martyrs, and the patient fortitude with which they met death, inclined some of the Jews first to pity them, and then to believe in the truth of a doctrine so fruitful in virtuous actions. The Epistle of St. James may be dated A.D. 60, about a year before his death. It is remarkable, that the authenticity of this Epistle has been questioned both in ancient and modern times, and particularly by Martin Luther, who, upon farther examination and reflection, retracted his opinion; and the fact is, no portion of the Canonical Scriptures is better ascertained than this, both by external and internal evidence: hence we may derive an instructive lesson and caution,

¹ Joseph. Antiq. B. XX. c. 9, 10.

² Euseb. B. II. c. 9. 23.

not rashly and hastily to reject passages of holy writ, which oppose our opinions, for these opinions, how conscientious soever, may be prejudices, and it is our duty to frame our principles maturely upon an enlarged view and deliberate consideration of the entire Word of God, without assigning undue importance to detached and selected parts. This apostle presided over the first Christian council at Jerusalem, and is, by the old writers, called Bishop of that place, an office for which he appears to have been peculiarly qualified by a mildness and goodness of character, which conciliated even unbelievers. The singular address of the Epistle, "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," would imply a design of influencing all the Jews, whether as yet converts to the Gospel or not: it is also to be observed, that the writer does not insist upon the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, but contents himself with recommending, in plain and beautiful language, the purest precepts of practical virtue and benevolence without partiality or hypocrisy; as if his mind had been full of our Lord's gracious promise, "if any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God¹."

¹ John vii. 17.

It must be owned that St. James's Epistle, taken by itself, would afford an imperfect view of the Christian scheme of redemption ; on the other hand, it supplies a useful and necessary commentary to St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, as stated in his Epistle to the Romans, written a few years previously, a doctrine which had been perverted ¹ at the time, by the predestinarian Jews and Christians, and has been often since, to defend those absurd and impious propositions, that the Divine decrees are absolute without reference to men's good or bad conduct, and that a profession of true religion is sufficient for salvation, even to those who take no care to conform their lives to it, and to prove their faith by their works.

Eusebius ² relates that the successor to St. James in the Bishopric of Jerusalem, was Simeon, who appears to have been his brother, son of Cleopas ³ or Alpheus. But the reader will seek in vain for authentic accounts of particulars of the lives of the apostles, evangelists, and first preachers of the Gospel, and their missionary

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

² Hist. B. III. c. xi.

³ Luke xxiv. 18. ; John xix. 25.

labours; for of these no early records exist. Even of St. Peter there is no mention in Scripture of later date than A.D. 50. when St. Paul reproved him ¹ at Antioch; but some circumstances of his history, which we shall hereafter have occasion to relate, may be gleaned from genuine fragments of information. The silent but rapid progress of the Gospel, is an indisputable proof that the first teachers exerted themselves to spread the Christian faith, both among Jews and Gentiles; by the blessing of God, it prevailed insensibly, according to our Lord's prediction, "as seed springs and grows up, men know not how ²."

The manner of the early propagation of the Gospel, in secrecy and quietness, by very humble instruments, who continually felt and acknowledged their own insufficiency, should teach us that success is wholly from God; human attainments, and worldly wisdom, and schemes of policy, have never produced, and cannot produce, an effect equal to the first delivery of the Gospel in simplicity and truth, by persons entirely devoted in their hearts and lives to its ministry, under a perfect reliance and depend-

¹ Gal. ii. 11.

² Mark iv. 26.

ence upon the Divine blessing and support. No one can deliberately contemplate the preservation of the infant Christian Church, and its original enlargement, under the most unfavourable and adverse circumstances, by means manifestly inadequate, without feeling that the ordinary causes influencing human affairs, will not account for the establishment of opinions, which, instead of alluring, checked all worldly interests and passions, and that the hand of Providence must have been in this work. Profiting by the examples of the first teachers, we may conclude that the prosperity of missionary efforts is not in proportion to the noise and parade attending them, and the ostentation of conversions ; but that the Divine favour rests with that spiritual wisdom, which is pure, gentle, and peaceable, and which works with a still and quiet assiduity.

CHAPTER VI.

PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL FROM A.D. 60, TO THE END OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

PAUL, keeping firm to his determination of appealing to the emperor, is delivered over to Julius, a centurion of Augustus's band, who, like all the other Roman authorities, treated him with uniform kindness and humanity. The voyage began in Cæsarea, in the autumn, A.D. 60¹, when Paul was probably about sixty years old; Luke, his faithful biographer, and Aristarchus², accompanied him, and there were other prisoners in the ship. The second day they touched at Sidon, and Paul was allowed to land, probably to visit the Christians there³; from Sidon they sailed, under Cyprus, to Myra in Lycia, and

¹ See Lardner and Macknight.

² Acts xxvii.

³ Acts xi. 19.

there went on board another ship, of Alexandria, bound for Rome, laden with corn, which must have been of large size, for it held two hundred and seventy-six passengers. They reached Crete slowly, and with difficulty, and were obliged to put into "the fair havens;" and seeing the danger of proceeding at that advanced season of the year, Paul, who had much experience in sailing, advised to defer the voyage. The master and owner of the ship held a different opinion, and prevailed with the centurion to proceed, that they might at least endeavour to reach Phoenice, a more commodious port in Crete, for wintering in. They had not gone far, when a tempestuous wind, a Levanter, arose, which drove the vessel out of her course; they undergirded the ship, strake sail, and were obliged to cast out the lading, and thus continued tempest-tossed, neither sun nor stars being visible for many days. Paul admonished them of their rashness in leaving Crete, but exhorted them to be of good cheer, in confidence of the Divine protection; after having been fourteen days without a regular meal, the apostle prevailed on them to take food, promising that God would preserve all their lives. This prediction was fully accomplished, through very

great dangers ; the ship struck at last on an island, which there can be little doubt was Malta, and was broken to pieces by the waves ; the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, perhaps through fear of being answerable for their escape ; but this barbarity the centurion, out of regard to Paul, prevented, and they all got safe to land, some by swimming, and others on pieces of the wreck.

Certainly no man ever appeared less likely to contribute to effect a mighty revolution in the world than Paul, in this most disastrous condition. He had cut asunder his Jewish connections ; the body of Christians, as yet, possessed no power or influence, and were persecuted on both sides by Jews and heathens ; he had no property, no rank, no friends of weight, no estimation in the world ; a prisoner, ship-wrecked on a little island in the midst of the wide sea, Paul, now advanced in life, suffering cold, hunger, and nakedness, seems to have made little account of difficulties, privations, and dangers ; but “ putting his life in his hand,” according to the emphatic phrase of the Scriptures, was prepared, under all circumstances, and at all hazards, to persevere in preaching Christ, the great, the sole object of his existence. The

party continued at Malta three months, Paul performing many miraculous cures, which caused the islanders to honour the Christians. Our thoughts are carried on to contrast the Divine virtues exhibited by the apostle, in abasement, with the commanding genius of Hildebrand, who, one thousand years afterwards, claimed, as successor of St. Peter, and well nigh exercised, universal dominion, nominally spiritual, but really temporal also, and supreme over all kings and countries. No trace of the assumption of such sovereign power is found in Holy Writ, on the part of Peter, or Paul, or any apostle, or of all the apostles collectively; not in the decrees of the council at Jerusalem, over which St. James presided, addressed "to the brethren of the Gentiles;" not in the Epistles of St. Paul, who does not even name St. Peter, in writing to the Roman Christians, nor in writing from Rome; not in the two Epistles of St. Peter himself. Paul, who performed miraculous cures, by the same power of inspiration, delivered over certain persons ¹ to temporal sufferings for the recovery of their souls; but this was a special act of personal authority. The Christian Church,

¹ 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20,

doubtless, possessed the power of excommunication¹, of expelling unworthy members, a power inherent in all societies, and which was exercised to extremity, in matters of religion, both by Heathens and Jews, who persecuted the early Christians to death, for supposed impiety. But the Hildebrandine system was a despotic encroachment² upon the rights of independent nations and communities, the monstrous growth of superstition in an ignorant age, aided by the feudal usages, which, having familiarized the people with the arbitrary supremacy of temporal rulers, led them easily to recognize a spiritual lord paramount.

If the Scriptures had not been lost sight of, it is next to impossible that the Bishop of Rome could have claimed, or the Christian world have acknowledged, a right, derived to him as successor of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, and representative of Christ, to govern the whole Church, by an irresponsible and unerring authority, which enabled him to depose kings in certain cases, absolve their subjects from their allegiance, and lay entire nations under an interdict, thus depriving a whole population, the innocent with the guilty indiscriminately, of the offices of the

¹ 1 Cor. v. 11 ; 2 John x.

² Hallam, Mid. Ages, ch. vii.

Church, and almost of the benefits of the Christian religion. In candour it must indeed be owned, that this ecclesiastical despotism was preferable to the iron tyranny of the lay rulers, whose vices it checked.

Two observations here suggest themselves; the duty and advantage of a constant reference to the written Word of God, as a sufficient rule both of faith and practice for salvation. The Scriptures, giving only general precepts, are favourable to freedom, and are easily adapted to the wants and habits of all communities, how differently soever constituted; in temporal affairs they explicitly render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and leave the discipline and polity of the Church very much to human authority, which being necessarily liable to error, often requires reform, like the management of all human affairs. Secondly, since from the lowest and humblest condition, Christianity attained, by a triumphant progress, to the summit of human greatness and power, by means inconsistent with its purest principles, and in a manner wholly unforeseen at its origin, we surely need not despair of its propagation in truth and simplicity; on the contrary, we may be encouraged to hope that, by a righteous and virtuous perseverance

in our duty, we may, in this our day, contribute, under the Divine blessing, to extend the faith of Christ over the whole habitable globe, in strict accordance with the promises of prophecy, and the suitableness of the Gospel to the universal wants of mankind.

The shipwrecked men proceeded in another Alexandrian ship to Syracuse, the capital of Sicily, from thence to Rhegium and to Puteoli, with a favourable voyage. At Puteoli, a large sea-port town, not far from Naples, the Christians found "brethren," with whom the centurion, according to his usual kindness, allowed Paul to remain seven days. The news of the apostle's landing reached Rome, and brethren came to meet them on their journey, some as far as Appii Forum, fifty miles from that city.

We may place Paul's arrival at Rome in the spring, A.D. 61, in the seventh year of Nero's reign. The humane centurion Julius, in delivering up his prisoner, no doubt made a favourable report of his character and conduct, and perhaps of his doctrine; and Paul, instead of being thrown into a common prison, was allowed to dwell by himself, chained by the wrist, according to the custom, to a Roman soldier. In other respects

he seems to have had great liberty ; and “ after three days ” called together the chief of the Jews, both to excuse himself from any appearance of disrespect towards the nation and the courts in Judea, and also to explain his religious opinions and belief in Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Scriptures. The conference was repeated at Paul’s lodging ; and finding many of his hearers unconvinced, the apostle reminded them of that stupid unbelief foretold by the prophet Isaiah¹, and declared that salvation was sent to the Gentiles. Meanwhile, no accuser arrived from Judea against him ; “ he dwelt two whole years in his own hired house,” without molestation, preaching the kingdom of God², and teaching the Gospel of Christ to all comers, with all confidence.

With this brief notice the sacred historian closes his account, not deeming it necessary to detail the particulars of Paul’s ministerial labours in the capital of the Roman empire. From the silence of the inspired writer, we may conclude that enough is recorded, though not to satisfy our curiosity, yet for our guidance in propagating the faith ; a work which is to be carried on, by different generations of men, not with a servile

¹ Isaiah vi. 9.

² Acts xxviii.

imitation of all the steps of their predecessors, but with a generous freedom, which, while it preserves the genuine spirit and true doctrine of the Gospel, adapts its course, with reasonable prudence, to existing circumstances. We may be assured that Paul continued to preach the same Gospel, Christ crucified, and with that mixture of zeal and argument, which belonged to his character : being a prisoner, he could not harangue the inhabitants of the metropolis in their temples, or in the streets, or even in the Jewish synagogues, (which would have been no safe proceeding), but contented himself with gaining and confirming sincere converts, by private conversations and discourses, among those who resorted to his residence ; notwithstanding "this sect" of Christians "was every where spoken against¹."

The apostle had opened the way by his Epistle to the Christians at Rome, written about three years before from Corinth. This great work explains the necessity of a Redeemer for all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, because all are sinners ; it states, what the Jews could not bear, that the ceremonial law of Moses, having per-

¹ Acts xxviii. 22.

formed its office, is now abrogated, and that all mankind would henceforth be admitted upon equal terms, namely, faith and repentance, to the advantages and blessings of this new and better covenant. During these two years of confinement, Paul wrote four Epistles,—those to the Philippians, Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians; and from the notices scattered undesignedly through them, we may gather that this preacher in bonds made many converts¹ to the Gospel, some even in the imperial household. It appears also that he had several faithful fellow-labourers² with him at Rome,—Timothy, Luke, Tychicus, Onesimus, Mark, Jesus called Justus, and Aristarchus and Epaphras, who, from their zeal in preaching the Gospel, were both imprisoned. The Colossians sent Epaphras to comfort the apostle in his long confinement, and the Philippians sent Epaphroditus on the same affectionate errand, adding a supply of money, which seems to have been sufficient for his moderate wants. Epaphroditus³ fell sick from his exertions. What a beautiful example of unaffected resignation does Paul afford in his pecu-

¹ Philip. i. 12, 13; iv. 22.

² Coloss. iv.; Philemon 23.

³ Philip. ii.

liar circumstances, and of humility ! “Brethren,” he says, “I count not myself to have apprehended¹, but I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” and “in whatsoever state I am, I have learned therewith to be content.” Here are no symptoms of spiritual pride, nor of sullenness or despondency—feelings which his condition would naturally enough have prompted ; but the grace of Christ preserves to him a constant modesty, temper, cheerfulness, and courage. What is more, he never relaxes from watchfulness as a faithful overseer of the Christian Church ; although these four Epistles are written, with little reproof, and in a tone of genuine cordial kindness and satisfaction, the apostle continually urges the necessity of Christian proficiency, and repeats his warnings against the errors of Judaizing teachers ; for opposing whom, he had already suffered so much. He waives all the Jewish privileges, to which none had a higher claim than himself, stating, “we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus² ;” he warns the Colossians³ to “let no man judge them in meat, or in drink, or in respect of holy-

¹ Philip. iii. 14.² Ibid. iii.³ Coloss. ii.

days," for these are but shadows of the true Church, Christ's body, and not to be beguiled to lose the reward of their faith in Christ, "by voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels." He who thus proclaims Christ, as the only cause of salvation, to all without distinction, "Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free," gives, at the same time, precepts of moral duty and virtue, so pure and excellent, that they cannot be read without emotion, and prove that the morality of the Gospel is inspired, like its doctrines. The Epistle to the Ephesians is of the same tenor, but in a yet higher spiritual strain, and calculated to animate true Christians, according to Dr. Macknight's observation, as with the sound of a trumpet.

After St. Paul's release from his bonds, A.D. 63, he remained some little time in Italy, and wrote or dictated the Epistle to the Hebrews. The tone is very different from that sharp reproof and castigation which the apostle, on former occasions, administered to those teachers who made a mixture of the Law and the Gospel: he here seems desirous of settling the question once for all, by calm expostulation, and a thorough explanation of the old covenant, in

order to shew that the promises, the law, and the sacrifices, established through Abraham, and Moses, and the Prophets, all pointed to Christ, and were preparatory and introductory to this new and better covenant. The writer insists upon the superiority of the person and character of Christ, as God, above all men and angels, and the consequent superior efficacy of his one offering of himself, to redeem men from sin, and open to the faithful an eternal inheritance.

We should be glad to attend to the voice of traditional antiquity, and to believe that St. Paul visited Spain and Great Britain; but it is more safe to trace the obscure remainder of his life through the intimations given in the Scriptures. It appears, that sailing from Italy, A.D. 63, for Jerusalem, with Timothy and Titus, he landed at Crete, and left Titus on that island to perform the office of a bishop¹. From Judea, which he must have found full of disturbances, the apostle probably proceeded to Antioch, according to his accustomed course; to Colosse, where he had desired Philemon to provide him a lodging²; and to Ephesus, where he left

¹ Titus i.

² Phil. 22.

Timothy¹ with episcopal authority. About this time was written the Epistle to Titus. Certainly St. Paul was at Troas², and wintered at Nicopolis, in Epirus³, and there probably wrote the First Epistle to Timothy. From thence we trace him to Corinth⁴, to Crete, and again to Rome, under persecution and affliction. The unabated vigilance of the apostle had detected the introduction of corruptions into the Christian Church, from the doctrines of the Gnostics and heathen philosophers; and cautions against them are scattered in these latter Epistles⁵. The faithful apostle, preserving always the simplicity of Christian truth, as he would admit no compromise with Judaism, now guards against any insidious accommodation with a deceitful philosophy, and science falsely so called. The last Epistle to Timothy intimates many affecting circumstances,—the desertion of friends during the apostle's second imprisonment; the particular malice of enemies; his great desire twice repeated to see Timothy, whom he seems to have loved above all men; his animated exhortations

¹ 1 Tim. i. 3. ² 2 Tim. iv. 13. ³ Titus iii. 12.

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7. 20. See Macknight, Lardner, and Horne.

⁵ Coloss. ii. 8; 1 Tim. i. 4. and vi. 20.

now given to him for the last time "to watch¹, to endure afflictions, to do the work of an evangelist, to give full proof of his ministry;" and, above all, Paul's own conviction that the time of his martyrdom was approaching. Here is encouragement for the Christian missionary, which a comment upon the words of inspiration can only weaken; "I am now ready to be offered: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." What a glorious consummation of his apostolic labours; and what a convincing proof does the close of Paul's life afford of his consistent and entire heavenly-mindedness!

It is computed that in July, A.D. 64, the fire broke out in Rome, which raged for six days and nights, and consumed a great part of the city. The calamity was thus far turned to advantage, that the houses were rebuilt in a much more commodious and handsome manner,

¹ 2 Tim. iv.

with spacious streets and gardens ; but the unpopular feeling long excited against Nero (whose very name has become infamous, and in common acceptation denotes a monstrous character of cruelty and sensuality, stamped with vices equally horrible and contemptible, at which nature shudders,) was now aggravated against him to a formidable degree as the wanton author of this extensive mischief. In order to relieve himself from the load of hatred and suspicion, he cunningly turned the charge of this atrocity upon the Christians, who were more disliked than the Jews themselves, with whom they were confounded, and had no possible means of defence. The general odium under which they laboured may be collected from the language of two historians of that age, who seem to abhor the Christians more than Nero, and as they have certainly exaggerated in this instance, may perhaps have overcharged the emperor's guilt. Suetonius¹, reckoning up the brief catalogue of Nero's actions deserving commendation, places among them the persecution of the Christians. Tacitus², a writer of superior character, though he acquits the Christians of being the real incen-

¹ Nero, 16.

² Annal. xv. 44.

diaries, and allows that great numbers perished, yet considers they were justly punished as followers of a pestilent superstition, and enemies of the human race; he is only sorry that they became objects of pity, from the merciless tortures inflicted upon them, by being wrapped in skins and torn to pieces by dogs, or set on fire with their coverings to give light, instead of torches, during the night. The censures of religious men upon the profane are sometimes termed prejudice, bigotry, intolerance; but we have here a memorable proof of extreme animosity, on the other side, wholly undeserved, but which has been too often imitated.

As the outrageous inhumanity of Nero towards the Christians excited compassion even in those who thought them worthy of death, the constancy with which Providence endowed them to support their sufferings, claimed respect, particularly as they were notoriously innocent of the fire. Thus this persecution contributed to the extension of the Gospel. Moreover, about this time the Holy Spirit moved the followers of our Lord to add to the written word of God; the Gospel by St. Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles, and probably the Gospel by St. Mark,

the two Epistles of St. Peter, and the Epistle of St. Jude, were all, according to the most received computation, written not long after A.D. 60¹. These Scriptures seem to be addressed to Gentile rather than to Jewish converts; they must have made a favourable impression at the time among unbelievers, by a plain statement of the doctrines, the character, and the design of Christianity, very consistent with the former inspired writings, and very opposite to the calumnies devised by the opponents of the faith, and to those wild projects which continually instigated the Jews to tumult and revolt. For us, who have been called from the natural darkness of sin and ignorance, to the light of truth and immortality, we can never be sufficiently thankful for this blessed revelation of God's will, teaching salvation by the one Mediator and Redeemer Jesus Christ, and for the good example of those saints who persevered in preaching it through all trials, and bore testimony to the sincerity of their faith in death. The primitive Church² has

¹ This date, without aiming at scrupulous accuracy, is given after a consideration of the remarks of Bishop Tomline, Mr. H. Horne, Mr. Townsend, and the authorities already quoted.

² Tertullian, *Advers. Marcion*. l. iv. c. 5. Eusebius, l. ii. c. 25. See Dr. Routh's *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, vol. i. p. 168. 180.

always held that St. Peter and St. Paul both suffered martyrdom at Rome, in the Neronian persecution, A.D. 65 or 66. The Epistles of Peter are written in a majestic and highly spiritual style, becoming a chief apostle ; they contain no expressions which can be construed into a deference to Jewish customs, and a regard for the ritual law, or an assumption of personal authority and rule over the whole Christian Church : they teach salvation by faith in the sufferings of Christ, are full of exhortations to patience under afflictions, and submission to governors. The apostle gives the purest precepts of duty and virtue in private life, intimates his own approaching death, and admonishes those he addresses of the certainty of the dissolution of the world and the day of judgment ; “ seeing these things are so, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness ? ” It is a reasonable conjecture, that St. Peter had previously preached in person to the inhabitants of Asia Minor.

About the same time, Nero, tormented by suspicions of conspiracies, and in this case also instigated by avarice, forced his old preceptor, Seneca, to destroy himself. The philosopher met death

with Roman courage : it has been surmised that he might have conversed with St. Paul, or at least have imbibed some Christian opinions¹, particularly since he censures the current superstitions, and expresses noble sentiments of the providence of God, and even of the immortality of the soul. The baseness of his pupil, and his own unhappy circumstances, lead to a confirmation of those higher doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, the depravity of man, the necessity of a Redeemer, and a future retribution. Seneca affords an eminent instance of the insufficiency of philosophy, without Revelation, to account for the evils of life, or to remedy them. His stern and sorrowful determination in death, as an unavoidable calamity, strongly contrasts with the joyful hope and confidence of eternal happiness through Christ, expressed by the apostles, contemplating their departure from this life : and this comparison is too obvious to have escaped the notice of their contemporaries, and must have made an impression favourable to the reception of the Gospel.

¹ See Bishop Gray's Connection between the sacred writings and the literature of Jewish and Heathen Authors. Vol. I. p. 229, and vol. II. p. 416.

" Nero, having put to death his mother, his wife, his aged preceptor, and many good and illustrious senators and commanders; having, according to Tacitus's¹ strong expression, endeavoured to extirpate virtue itself from the earth, became too great an object of universal terror and hatred to live. Still the army kept the senate and citizens in awe; and it was in the provinces first², in Gaul and Spain, that the revolt broke out decidedly in favour of Galba, the chief commander in Spain. His partizans gained over the Prætorian bands at Rome, by bribes and promises; they proclaimed Galba emperor, and the senate, following the same track, adjudged Nero to a cruel death, as an enemy to the state. After much timorous and shameful hesitation, he anticipated this doom in a miserable manner by self-destruction, A.D. 68.

The Macedonian army, after the death of Alexander, has been compared to the Cyclops Polyphemus, deprived of eye-sight; and the Roman armies at this period exhibit the same image of gigantic power, blindly and furiously

¹ Annal. XVI. 21.

² Suetonius, Nero, c. 40. Tacitus, Hist. l. I. 5. 25. The lives of Galba and Otho, ascribed to Plutarch.

exercised. The habit of fidelity to the family of Cæsar having been once broken through, the soldiers, with capricious and rapacious tyranny, in the short space of ten months, raised three favourite leaders to the imperial throne, the aged Galba, the effeminate Otho, and the glutton Vitellius, who all perished by violent deaths, succeeding each other in short-lived tumultuous pageantry, like actors in a theatrical scene. The prospect of a better order of things opens under Vespasian, A.D. 70. This emperor, whose military abilities brought him into notice from an obscure family, had the good sense to associate his excellent son Titus with himself in the sovereign rule. Their joint reign of ten years is marked by events which were of the utmost importance to the province of Judea, and the nation of the Jews, and considerably affected the state of the Christians.

The Emperor Tiberius¹, perhaps to excuse his own dilatoriness, with his usual policy, pleaded humanity as the cause of his slowness in changing the governors of provinces, since more rapacity is to be expected from those who have a

¹ Josephus, *Antiq. B.* XVIII. c. 6. s. 5.

brief and uncertain authority; quoting at the same time the fable of the wounded man, who requested the bystanders not to drive away the flies which had settled on him, lest a fresh and more hungry swarm should fasten on his sores, and give him more acute pain. The moral is very reasonably pointed at the unhappy condition of Judea, which, harassed and torn by intestine disturbances, as we have seen, felt its wounds smart intolerably under the fangs of successive Roman procurators. Albinus, who followed Festus, took money to release the robbers and assassins who were in custody, and thus encouraged atrocities, of which he made a gain. A.D. 63. Disturbances ensued among the priesthood, in consequence of the oppressions of the high-priests, and the demand of the singers among the Levites to wear the linen, or priestly garments. About the same time King Agrippa finished the Temple, and many thousand workmen were discharged from employment, who of course contributed to the disorderly state of the nation. Anarchy and tyranny prevailed; "and at this time were those seeds sown which brought the city to destruction ¹."

¹ Josephus, Wars, B. II. c. 14. Antiq. B. XX. c. 9.

To Albinus, a bad governor, succeeded Gessius Florus, A.D. 65, who proved so much worse, that the Jews considered Albinus comparatively a benefactor. Florus, with a shameless and brutal disposition, made a boast of his iniquities, and provoked the Jews to rebellion with wanton malice, that he might allege an excuse for unprincipled exactions, not merely upon individuals, but over whole towns and districts. In vain the Jews, to the number of three millions, according to Josephus, appealed to Cestius Gallus, prefect of Syria, who came to Jerusalem at the time of the passover. The discontents, long stifled, broke into a flame, first at Cæsarea, in the twelfth year of Nero's reign, A.D. 66. The imperial edict had given the government of that city to the heathen; the Jews were insulted; the way to their synagogue was obstructed; and on the Sabbath, as they were repairing to worship, a Greek overset an earthen vessel in the way, and sacrificed birds, which action, signifying that the Jews were leprous¹, was a great affront and pollution: an attack ensued, and the Jews being worsted, departed with the books of their law to Nabata, about seven miles distance.

¹ Levit. xiv.

Deputies were sent to Samaria to Florus, who threw them all into prison, although he had previously received eight talents, to induce him to secure for them free access to their synagogue. This cruel ruler then proceeded to Jerusalem, demanded seventeen talents from the sacred treasury, and upon a pretence that the citizens, goaded by these injuries, had reviled him, gave orders to his soldiers to plunder and destroy. He was but too readily obeyed ; three thousand six hundred persons, including women and children, perished ; and this new ignominy was added, that many Jews of equestrian rank were scourged and crucified. Florus, having sufficiently kindled the sparks of rebellion, returned to Cæsarea, leaving only a small force at Jerusalem, which served the purpose of irritating the Jews still more, and instigating them to revolt. King Agrippa, who had been absent at Alexandria, on his return endeavoured to pacify the people, and made them a long speech, to shew the utter impossibility of their making head against the Roman power, and the prudence as well as justice of distinguishing between the mal-practices of the Governor Florus and the imperial authority. The chief-priests and principal citizens, with a moderate party, advocated the same pacific opinions, with considerable suc-

cess. But bolder spirits were abroad ; some of whom took by treachery the fortress Massada, near the Dead Sea, and having slain the Roman garrison, provided their followers with arms. The decisive step was taken by Eleazar¹, governor of the Temple, and son of Ananias the high-priest, who persuaded the inferior priests to reject the imperial offerings, and to receive no gift or sacrifice for any foreigner. The city was divided into two factions ; Eleazar, with the seditious, prevailed, drove out King Agrippa and his friends, and by degrees got possession of the strong places. The discord was again increased by Manahem, son of the noted Judas of Galilee, who had always declared the unlawfulness and impiety of submitting to the Roman power. Manahem usurped the kingly state, but was soon put down by the ambitious Eleazar himself, who continued to assault with success, one after another, the strong holds, in which the party of Agrippa and the Romans entrenched themselves. The remnant of the Roman garrison were at last obliged to surrender, on condition their lives were spared ; but they had no sooner quitted

¹ Wars, B. II. c. 17. s. 2. " I apprehend they refused to offer prayers and sacrifices, as subjects ought to do, for the Emperor, and for the prosperity of the Roman Empire."—Lardner, vol. vii. p. 54.

their arms, than they were all massacred, in cold blood, by Eleazar's soldiers. To add to the abomination of this barbarous act, it was committed on the Sabbath-day. Thoughtful men began to see that the war was incurable, and to anticipate with sorrow the time of vengeance, and that destructive doom which the Jews were hastening upon their own heads. Josephus¹ considers it a retribution of Providence, that on the same day a general massacre of the Jews took place at Cæsarea, perhaps at the instigation of Florus.

Maddened with the desire of revenge, the Jews retaliated, by plundering and wasting the towns of the Syrians, who in return conspired to slaughter the Jews. The whole country was a scene of confusion, revolt, and bloodshed; the national fatality extended to Alexandria, and the Jews there, in consequence of a turbulent insurrection against the citizens, were attacked by the Roman garrison, and slain in great numbers. Such universal calamities, falling upon one people at the same time in different spots, and brought on by their own infatuated conduct, are not in

¹ Wars, B. II. c. 18.

the common course of events. They fulfil in part our Lord's predictions¹, and we can well believe that the Jews would never have engaged in such unequal struggles, except in the hope of supernatural aid, and the expectation that the time of the advent of the promised Messiah had actually arrived. These sanguine feelings were heightened and assured by a signal victory gained at this juncture, A.D. 66. Cestius, the prefect of Syria, advanced against the rebels, with ten thousand Roman troops, and allies amounting to a still larger number, amongst them King Agrippa; and after taking some strong places, assaulted Jerusalem. After an attack of five days, the besiegers were on the point of taking the city, and had many friends within the walls, but the incapable commander, seized with a panic, suddenly withdrew his army without reason. The besieged, who had been in great consternation, recovered their spirit, pursued, and falling on the enemy in the defile of Bethhoron, defeated them with a slaughter of more than five thousand men.

Josephus² makes the remarkable observation,

¹ Matt. xxiv. 7.

² Wars, B. II. c. 19. s. 3. and c. 20.

that it was on account of the sins of the Jewish nation God prevented that pacification which would have been the result of a seasonable surrender, and the delivery of Jerusalem to the Romans. He adds, in very expressive language, that many eminent Jews took the opportunity, afforded by the defeat of Cestius, to leave the city, as men swim away from a sinking ship. We learn also from Eusebius¹, that at this time the Christians, under divine direction, quitted Jerusalem, and found a secure asylum in the little town of Pella, beyond the Jordan.

The general accounts of the Jewish historian concerning this fatal war, are abundantly confirmed by Tacitus², who, in his brief sententious manner, intimates, that if the Jews had not been molested on account of their religion, and otherwise injuriously treated, they would have continued in peaceable subjection to Rome.

It may, perhaps, be doubted whether Josephus is quite so much to be depended upon in his statement of events immediately following, in which he was himself a conspicuous actor, having been appointed governor of both the Galilees.

¹ Euseb. lib. III. c. 5.

² Tacit. Hist. XV. 9, 10.

Jerusalem prepared for defence, nominally under the authority of the high-priest ; but Eleazar¹, though disliked for his tyranny, contrived to obtain the real command. The insurgents had a just and righteous cause apparently, fighting for their country, their liberty, and their religion ; but the chief leaders had not the principles of the Maccabean brethren ; they were rather banditti-chiefs, whose object was spoil ; and their characters, infamous for violence, perfidy, and abandoned vices, would have sullied any cause.

Nero, incensed and terrified at the ill success of Cestius, sent the famous Vespasian to command in Syria ; a general, whose abilities and decision were well calculated to repair the mistakes of his imbecile predecessor. Vespasian, attended by king Agrippa, lost no time in marching from Antioch to Ptolemais, A.D. 67 ; and having there collected great reinforcements, and being joined by his son Titus, from Alexandria, with the two most eminent legions, the fifth and tenth, he entered Galilee with an army of sixty thousand men ; and, after some successes, pro-

¹ Wars, B. II. c. 20. s. 3. Eleazar is here called the son of Simon.

ceeded to besiege Jotapata, the strongest place. The garrison made a brave resistance for forty-seven days, under the able command of Josephus; most of them were slain, yet the Romans entered at last by means of a deserter. Josephus¹ hid himself in a cave with forty others; and though he calls in the aid of religion and philosophy to account for his deliverance, there appears no small share of worldly cunning in the manner by which he contrived his escape from imminent death, and made his peace with Titus and Vespasian². He professes to have been inspired in foretelling to Vespasian his elevation to the imperial dignity; a fortunate prediction, which, indeed, it required no extraordinary penetration to discover, might probably be realized, and would certainly be well accepted.

From this time Josephus became a fast friend to the Romans, and served them with fidelity, always retaining the favour of the imperial family. Let us do his character justice: born of one of the first Jewish families, both by priestly and royal descent, he diligently cultivated his mind

¹ Wars, B. III. c. 8. Life of Josephus.

² Ibid. Compare Tacitus, Hist. I. 10, and II. 78.

by study and travel, and fitted himself to excel both in counsel and action, among the extraordinary commotions of his time. Being entrusted with the command of a province against the Romans by his countrymen and the authorities at Jerusalem, he acted the part of a wise and just governor, if we will believe his own account, conciliating the people by his equitable and humane administration. By means of his precautionary measures, Jotapata was enabled to make its protracted and vigorous resistance against the whole Roman army, commanded by the best generals. This circumstance would alone obviate any suspicion of treachery on his part; and it is farther confirmed by the fact, that when tidings of the fall of Jotapata reached Jerusalem, there was a public mourning in consequence of the supposed death of the valiant commander. Josephus, in making the best terms he could with his conquerors, acted after the example of persons of undisputed honour; for instance, of the historian Polybius, and of his contemporary and friend, King Agrippa. It was indeed a matter of necessity to yield to the overpowering force of Rome: the Jewish revolt was a mad and hopeless undertaking, and so far unjustifiable, that there was no systematic de-

sign on the part of the imperial government to persecute the Jews for their religion, as Antiochus Epiphanes had done. Finally, Josephus was no renegade or unprincipled apostate ; he did not become an idolator ; but remained in the faith of his forefathers. His writings exhibit marks of a constant, sincere, and devout reliance upon Divine Providence : and it must be confessed that the confused and disconsolate affairs of his country were enough to perplex occasionally the soundest judgment. His works afford an invaluable commentary to the New Testament, and confirm the facts therein detailed, with unexceptionable testimony ; because, as the Jewish historian did not profess Christianity, no suspicion of designedness can attach to his statements.

We must not pass over a remarkable change now apparent in the language of Josephus : the insurgents, whom he before termed Jews, receive henceforth, in his history, the denomination of seditious, *στασιαστας*. Vespasian employed the two next years in subduing the fortified towns held by the revolters, in Galilee, and in the dominions of Agrippa, on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth ; his character is stained by an act

of great perfidy and cruelty, in murdering the inhabitants of Taricheæ after their surrender. Intelligence of the death of Nero having been received, Vespasian sent his son Titus with Agrippa to congratulate the new emperor Galba; but Titus proceeded no farther than Greece; and, having heard there that Nero was no more, returned to Judea. Vespasian must now have conceived a hope of being emperor; and this thought may have diverted him from prosecuting, with his accustomed decision, the Jewish war; or he might consider it good policy to let the inhabitants of Jerusalem exhaust their strength against each other in those furious dissensions which now afflicted that unhappy city with sanguinary conflicts, and brought on miseries unparalleled in history.

Gischala, a strongly fortified place, resisted the Roman arms longer than any town in Galilee, under the command of John the son of Levi, a captain of robbers, whom Josephus describes as a man of the most unprincipled character, and of great subtlety. On the reduction of the fortress, he contrived, by a stratagem, to escape the general destruction, and made his way to Jerusalem. He there found two parties, the one com-

posed of respectable citizens, and elderly men, with the High-Priest, Ananus, at their head, who advocated prudent measures, and, according to Josephus, were inclined to make reasonable terms with the Romans; the other party consisted of the young, rash population, of robbers and Sicarii, and were commanded by fit leaders, such as Eleazar, who assumed the name of Zealots, Ζηλωτας, “as¹ if they had been zealous in good deeds, and were not rather zealous in the worst and most outrageous actions.” The Zealots established themselves in the temple as their fortress, and profanely making a sport of sacred things, proceeded to choose a High-Priest by lot promiscuously, from a pontifical tribe, instead of preserving the succession to that office in one family. The lot fell upon a peasant, who was not only unworthy, but who did not well know what the High Priesthood was; yet they dressed him up in robes and a mask, prompting him to play a part, like an actor on the stage, while the real priests shed tears at this impious mockery. Captains of troops of robbers, who had ravaged the country, now crept into the city, which was without a governor,

¹ Wars, B. IV. ch. 3. § 9.

together with a useless multitude, who only consumed provisions: these vulgar leaders plundered and murdered some of the most eminent citizens, particularly three of royal lineage, on pretence that they held communication with the Romans.

John of Gischala ostensibly joined the party of Ananas; but being trusted to hold a conference with the Zealots, after they had suffered a defeat from the better citizens, he intimated that Ananas thought of yielding to the Romans, and advised calling in the aid of the Idumeans, who had been incorporated with the Jews, since the conquest of Hyrcanus. This wild race, bred up to adventure, eagerly accepted the invitation; and having gained access by stratagem to their confederates in the town, during a tremendous storm, the Zealots and the Idumeans joined forces, and, falling on the citizens, slew Ananas, and slaughtered the people without mercy, like brute beasts. The barbarities and sacrilege committed were so shocking, that at length the Idumeans departed, struck with remorse, and disgusted at the wickedness of their allies; "who themselves," says Josephus, "¹ occasioned the fulfilment

¹ Wars, B. IV. c. 6. § 3.

of the prophecies against their own country, and with their own hands polluted the temple of God."

John of Gischala began to shew more plainly his tyrannical disposition, and the devoted city had to struggle with three of the greatest calamities,—war, tyranny, and sedition. To these were now added a fourth misfortune, for Simon, son of Gioras, having headed some robbers, who had seized the strong fortress of Masada, too few for an army, and too many for a gang of thieves, carried his devastations to the walls of Jerusalem, and was invited in by some of the people, in the hope that any change would afford relief from their urgent distresses and the tyranny of John¹. There were now, therefore, three factions in the city; the Zealots, under Eleazar, in number between two and three thousand, who possessed the strong-hold of the Temple; Simon's² army, amounting to ten thousand, besides Idumeans, in possession of the upper city; and the party of John of Gischala, occupying the lower city, between the two, and consisting of six thousand armed men.

¹ Wars, B. IV. c. 9. § 11.

² B. V. c. 1. and c. 6.

Zeal, or affected zeal, is often seen to supply, in vulgar estimation, the place of all good qualities, of information and education, of talents, honesty, and religion. The Zealots abandoned themselves to drunkenness; the followers of John of Gischala¹ wallowed in unnatural excesses of sensuality, mixing effeminacy with cruelty; Simon was the more bloody; and these ferocious factions, in wanton mischief, set fire to the houses full of corn and provisions, thus "cutting off the nerves of their own power²," and preparing the way for the reduction of the town by famine. Before this, the most sacred precincts of the Temple and the altar itself had been continually defiled and polluted with the blood flowing from the wounds of the Zealots, with their dead bodies and the bodies of strangers, and with the blood of dead carcasses of all kinds. Well might Josephus exclaim, "O most wretched city, what misery so great as this didst thou suffer from the Romans, who came to purify thee; for thou couldst no longer be an habitation fit for God, having become a sepulchre for thine own people. Peradventure thou mayest

¹ Wars, B. IV. c. 9. § 10.

² B. V. c. 1. § 4.

repent, and by amendment appease the anger of God, the author of thy destruction ¹."

The aged people began to wish for the Romans, in the hope of being relieved from their internal calamities and miseries: and that wish was soon about to be realized. Vespasian had been saluted emperor by the soldiers, (A.D. 69,) and repaired to Rome to assume and secure the purple. Before his departure, he liberated Josephus the historian, from his bonds, acknowledging the truth of his prediction; and committed to his son Titus the task of subduing the rebellious capital, Jerusalem. The well-disposed citizens were intercepted in their attempts to escape, and put to death by the heads of the factions, who agreed in nothing but in killing the innocent. The noise of fighting and of lamentation was incessant in the town, and still more dreadful was the condition of those mourners who dared not complain for fear of being tortured. Unburied corpses lay in heaps: John committed the sacrilege of employing in the construction of engines those sacred materials, the timber which king Agrippa had procured for enlarging the holy house.

¹ Wars, B V. c. 2. § 3.

Titus¹ advanced from Cæsarea, through Samaria, having under his command a large army, in excellent order, possessing those advantages of military science and discipline, and stern determination, which characterized the great empire, whose occupation had so long been war. Halting his forces at a distance of four miles from the city, the general went forward with six hundred horse to reconnoitre; proceeding straight to a suburb called Bezetha, at the north part of the town, he then declined westwards by the walls towards the tower Psephinus. The Jews made suddenly a vigorous sally, and very nearly cut off the party, Titus being indebted for his escape to his own personal valour; he charged through the enemy, and though unarmed, providentially reached the camp without a wound, through a shower of darts and arrows.

The fifth legion now joined from Emmaus, and encamped at Scopos (the Prospect,) within a mile of the city; from this spot it is seen to advantage along a plain, extending to the north wall of the suburbs, or Bezetha, "the new city." The tenth legion occupied a station at the mount of Olives, which rises three quarters of a mile to the east of Jerusalem, the brook Cedron running

¹ Wars, B. V. c. 2.

between, through the valley of Jehoshaphat. Dr. Clarke describes, in vivid terms, a bird's-eye view of the whole city, from the mount of Olives; then the lofty Temple must have been a magnificent spectacle, its white walls shining in the morning sun, "like a mountain of snow, with gilded pinnacles¹." Josephus states that the Jews, having employed the labour of ages on this their favourite national and religious work, had gradually raised the edifice, with stones of immense magnitude, to the height of 300 cubits, or 450 feet, a measure which is credible, and we may well believe the "perpendicular depth was frightful to the valley of Cedron²."

It being the time of the Passover, when multitudes were accustomed to repair to Jerusalem, Eleazar admitted into the Temple those who wished to worship God. The subtle John seized the opportunity to gain access for some of his followers, who, concealing arms under their garments, suddenly attacked the Zealots, and by this treachery obtained possession of the Temple; thus the three factions were reduced to two.

¹ Wars, B. V. c. 5. § 1.

² B. VI. c. 3. § 2. The Castle Rock at Edinburgh stands 443 feet, and Arthur's Seat 822 feet, above the level of the sea.

Titus, in order to press the attack, made a level road from Scopos, and brought his whole army to encamp within a quarter of a mile of the walls, on the north-western side, from the tower Psephinus to the tower Hippicus, on the same spot where Pompey had stationed his army. The Jews made desperate sallies, in one of which they nearly routed the tenth legion at the mount of Olives : sometimes they deluded their enemies into danger by pretended surrenders ; as Titus rode round the walls, they wounded one of his friends, Nicanor, with an arrow. The Roman general, provoked by this resistance, felt also the determination to conquer, familiar by long custom and repeated successes to the Roman arms : he constructed three engines, eighty feet high, on the embankment, and with great difficulty, and after many repulses¹, battered down a part of the wall, through which breach the Roman army fought their way, Titus killing twelve men with his own hand, and made a lodgement in the Betheza, on the fifteenth day of the siege. The assailants thus only possessed themselves of one-fourth part of the city, and that the weakest ; it required five days

¹ Wars, B. V. c. 7.

to demolish a second inner wall, defended by three towers; and afterwards there still remained, as impregnable as ever, the two strong holds, the Temple, occupied by John and the Zealots, and the upper city of Zion, where Simon commanded with an authority much feared and respected. Within the second wall were shops and markets in Acra, or the lower city; and Titus might easily have set these on fire in the narrow streets, and laid waste, according to the laws of war; but his humanity prevailed to spare the citizens, whose cause he wished to separate from that of the garrison. The insurgent leaders interpreted this forbearance as a mark of weakness; despairing themselves of mercy, they put to death those who talked of peace; and by furious onsets drove back the Romans, and regaining the inner wall, held possession of it for four days more. "God¹," says Josephus, "blinded their minds, on account of their heinous transgressions, that they could not see the overwhelming force prepared against them, nor the famine rapidly approaching."

Titus still was willing to try farther means for preventing bloodshed. Granting an interval of

¹ Wars, B. V. c. 9.

relaxation, the general drew out his whole army in battle array before the walls, and distributed to the soldiers their pay ; while their great numbers, their shining arms, and excellent order, caused consternation to the besieged, who eagerly thronged upon the battlements and houses to view the parade of their enemies. Titus also sent Josephus to parley with his countrymen ; and from a safe place, out of reach of the weapons, he made them a long and sensible speech, to persuade them to relinquish their desperate struggle, and to accept terms of surrender ; but in vain.

Meanwhile the Romans, with steady purpose, raised banks against the lofty tower Antonia, which defended the north-west corner of the Temple, and also against the upper city Zion. The famine began to make great ravages amongst the besieged, setting parents against children, and children against parents ; and the soldiers practised horrible tortures upon those citizens who were suspected of secreting food ; while John and Simon, agreeing only in wickedness, tyrannized over the people, and plundered them mutually, each of what the other had left. Miserable wretches, who crept out into the valleys by night to search for food, were caught by the

Romans, and crucified in such numbers, that at length ¹ room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses for the bodies. Titus allowed this cruelty, with the design of inducing the Jews to submit ; but it had a contrary effect ; the insurgents inflaming their minds the more to resistance, and declaring that God himself would protect his own people and Temple.

Antiochus Epiphanes, son of the king of Com-magene, arriving with an army of auxiliaries, young men, took occasion to expostulate with Titus for his tardiness in making the assault. Titus smiled, and said he would share the danger with him ; but Antiochus, brave and sanguine, having rushed suddenly to the walls, his followers were almost all wounded, and he was obliged to make a speedy retreat.

For seventeen days the Romans toiled incessantly to raise four banks against Antonia and the Temple ; and when now they moved their engines upon them, the whole fell suddenly in with great noise and destruction, thick flames breaking out from beneath. John had, with great military skill, undermined the banks, and having spread over the materials with pitch and

¹ Wars, B. V. c. xi.

sulphur, contrived to set them on fire at the critical moment. Two days after this, Simon sallied out to destroy the banks and set fire to the engines raised against Zion, with great success; the inflexible courage of his followers more than compensating for their deficiency in numbers and strength.

Embarrassed by the obstinate valour of the defenders, which he must have respected, Titus consulted with his commanders upon future measures; not that there was any doubt of continuing the siege, or of ultimate success; but the honour of the Roman army, commanded by a Cæsar in person, would be compromised, and its glory diminished, either if the surrender were too long delayed, or compelled at too great expense of lives on the part of the besiegers. Titus, therefore, proposed, as the best expedient for combining quickness with security, to raise a wall, or vallum, round the whole city, by which means the Jews would be prevented alike from escaping, and from obtaining provisions by stealth. So ambitious were the soldiers to accomplish their general's wish, that the wall to the extent of five miles was completed in three days. Thus was the Roman power an uncon-

scious instrument of Providence, in producing the literal fulfilment of that prophecy, which our Lord delivered weeping over Jerusalem: "The days¹ shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." The famine increased to a dreadful extent; the sufferers perished in silence more terrible than lamentations, or than the miseries themselves, dying with their eyes fixed on the Temple. The dead bodies were cast down from the walls into the valleys beneath; and when Titus, as he diligently went round the works, saw them putrifying in heaps, he groaned, and spreading his hands to heaven, called God to witness this was not his doing.

The wall, or bank, raised with such expedition, could not have had great height or strength; but the work shewed the great numbers of the Roman soldiers, their discipline, and

¹ St. Luke. xix. 43. Wars, B. V. c. 12.

devotion to their leader. They also brought materials from a distance of ten miles, for the purpose of constructing new banks against the Antonia. The pertinacity of the insurgents was not yet overcome, or rather the counsels of Providence were to be accomplished by their own obstinate perseverance in vice and impiety. Matthias, one of the high-priests, had, in his simplicity, admitted Simon into the city, hoping that he might relieve the people from the tyranny of John and the Zealots : and now Simon ¹, with odious barbarity, appointed one of his guards, notorious for cruelty, to slay the old man, upon the plea of his holding communication with the Romans, and first of all to put to death his three sons before his face. This atrocity was highly resented even by some of Simon's followers, and caused them to think of deserting to the Romans. Meanwhile John committed wanton sacrilege, in melting down, for common use, the sacred vessels and presents given to the holy service of the Temple, and in distributing the consecrated oil and wine among the multitude. These ungodly abominations Josephus considers

¹ Wars, B. V. c. 13.

were sufficient to draw down Divine judgments similar to the fire from heaven, which consumed Sodom. He himself was wounded on the head by a stone, and with difficulty carried off by the Romans, to the great grief of his mother, a prisoner within the walls, who thought he had been killed. About this time a deserter informed Titus that at one gate, entrusted to his care, one hundred and fifteen thousand eight hundred and eighty dead bodies had been carried out from the commencement of the siege, April 14th, until the 1st day of July.

In the course of twenty-one days the Romans raised their new banks and engines with battering-rams, having, in constructing them, cut down all the neighbouring trees, and reduced the pleasant gardens and beautiful suburbs to a state of melancholy desolation. Both parties were dispirited; the Jews fearing the capture of the town, and the Romans lest these materials for siege, the last that remained, should be destroyed by their fierce enemies. The assailants, after a day's hard fighting, loosened four large stones in the wall; and in the night it fell, having been partly undermined by the excavation formerly made by John: still behind the breach appeared another wall, newly erected by the besieged.

The Romans, encouraged by success, and animated by a speech from Titus, pressed the attack, and, breaking through this new obstacle, made themselves masters of the Antonia, and very nearly gained possession of the Temple itself.

Titus ordered a great part of the tower Antonia to be razed to the rock on which it stood, in order to afford a free passage for his soldiers; and having understood that the daily perpetual sacrifice in the Temple¹ had ceased, for want of persons to offer it, he commissioned Josephus to propose to John free egress, if he would come out of the Temple, and thus prevent its defilement and profanation: a proposal which, whether originating in religious feeling or not, must have very much conciliated the devout Jews both within and without the walls. The insurgents received the affecting appeal of Josephus and his companions with their usual disdain. The Romans persevered gradually in making nearer and nearer approaches up to the eminence on which the Temple stood; till at length the Jews themselves, in order to cut off all communication, set fire to the north-west

¹ See Dan. ix. 27.

cloister, which joined the Antonia, thus beginning the conflagration of the Sanctuary: the besiegers soon afterwards burnt the adjoining cloister.

John, fertile in stratagems, filled the roof of the western cloister with combustible materials, and then withdrew his men, as if exhausted with fatigue. The Romans inconsiderately applied ladders, and had no sooner filled the cloister, than they found themselves encompassed with flames, from which few escaped. The northern and western cloisters were now destroyed by both parties, and the area laid open on those two sides to the court of the Gentiles. Meanwhile the famine spread its ravages within the town, reducing even the robbers themselves to a state of delirium, and obliging the people to have recourse to the most disgusting food. Here Josephus¹ introduces, with very particular details, in a solemn and awe-struck manner, the account of that unmatched horror, the devouring of a sucking-child by his own mother, a woman of condition, who, like a demoniac, in her agony of famine and desperation, proclaimed this unnatural act to be a judgment and scandal resting

¹ Wars, B. VI. c. 4. § 4.

upon the whole nation, stained with unprecedented guilt: it was remarkably foretold by Moses¹.

The engines had battered the western buildings of the Temple for six days without effect, on account of the vast size of the stones², and the compactness with which they were morticed together. The Romans had, with the utmost difficulty, loosened some of the outer stones of the northern gates, but they were still firmly upheld by the inner stones: the besiegers then scaled the cloisters of the inner court, but were repulsed with great loss by the Jews. Titus, as a last resource, commanded to set fire to the gates; and as soon as the silver plates, which covered them, were heated, the flames blazed out in the wood beneath, and spread through

¹ Deut. xxviii. 56.

² "Some of the stones were 70 feet long, 8 feet high, and 10 feet broad." Joseph. Wars, B. V. c. 5. § 6. This is about the size of Cleopatra's Needle. Pompey's Pillar is larger, the shaft being 88 feet high, by 9 feet diameter. Stonehenge is diminutive in comparison. The largest stone ever moved, probably, is that which forms the pedestal to the statue of Peter the Great, at St. Petersburg, being 42 feet long at the base, and 36 feet at the top, 21 thick, and 17 high; weight 1500 tons. How the Jews moved these immense stones is matter of wonder. •

the cloisters. Titus called a council of six commanders, and issued orders for stopping the fire and sparing the holy house ; but a greater than Titus had ordained that it should not be preserved. The Jews were that day too much exhausted, and struck with consternation at the sight of the flames encompassing them within the sacred precincts, to exercise their wonted courage ; but the next day they rallied, and pushing out, through the eastern gate, upon those who guarded the outer court, would have driven them from their post, had not Titus witnessed the attack from the Antonia, and sent a chosen body of horsemen to their rescue. He resolved to storm the Temple on the ensuing morning with his whole force ; but after he retired, the Jews made another attack, and were beaten back, the Romans entering in with them as far as the holy house. A common soldier, lifted up by a comrade, on the impulse of the moment, threw some burning materials into a gilded window of the chambers on the north side : the flames blazed up immediately, and the Jews uttered loud cries at the sight. A messenger, in haste, informed Titus, who had gone to repose. The general hurried to the spot, and by shouts, and gestures, and commands, endeav-

voured to prevail on his troops to stop the conflagration, but in vain. The soldiery, exasperated by the long and sanguinary war, and eager for plunder, in the midst of confusion, noise, and slaughter, listened not to their commander: Titus, perceiving all efforts to restrain them useless, entered, with his officers, into the Holy of Holies, and having surveyed the interior with wonder and awe, made a last and fruitless attempt to save it from the flames¹. A soldier, in the dark, threw fire behind the hinges of the door, which spread at once, and soon consumed the whole edifice. This memorable event took place on the 10th of August, A.D. 70, the same month and day on which the former Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

John, with some brave followers, cut his way with difficulty against all opposition, through the outer court of the Temple, to the upper city. He and Simon, disheartened by the destruction of the Temple, demanded a conference, and Titus offered to spare their lives on condition of immediate surrender: they were perhaps afraid to trust him, and still held out for nearly a month. During that time the Roman general,

¹ Joseph. Wars, B. VI. c. 4.

incensed at a contest protracted without object, set fire to the lower town, Acra, and resolved upon the extermination of the unhappy people, who were massacred by thousands, both by the Romans, and by the robbers more ferocious than the enemy. These placed their last hope in the subterranean caves hollowed under the city in the limestone rock ; and when the walls were at last stormed, Simon and John escaped to their concealed hiding places, with miners and tools, expecting to work their way under ground¹, beyond the walls. But this proving too difficult a task, they were forced, by hunger, to yield themselves up, after the departure of Titus. John was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and Simon suffered death at Rome, upon the occasion of the triumph of Vespasian and Titus. The praise of blind courage cannot be denied to the insurgent chiefs, and it may be said the Romans themselves were robbers upon a large scale ; but there was this difference, the Romans, after levying a certain rate of taxation, secured to the inhabitants the peaceable enjoyment of the bulk of their property, while the banditti raised their hands against every man,

¹ Joseph. Wars, B. VI. c. 7 and 9. B. VII. c. 2.

took all they could find, and added to their pillage personal outrages of the most wanton and merciless kind.

The Temple was reduced to a heap of smouldering ruins, its pavements strewed with dead bodies, and running with blood; the consecrated treasures and ornaments of gold, silver, carved wood, and fine vestments, were all plundered or buried in one undistinguished mass: and, to complete "the abomination of desolation," the Romans planted their ensigns before the Eastern gate, and offered up their idolatrous sacrifices there¹, saluting Titus Imperator with joyful acclamations. The spoil was so great that gold in Syria fell to half its former value. Josephus² numbers the captive Jews at ninety-seven thousand, and those that were slain during the siege, including foreigners who came to worship, at eleven hundred thousand. The besiegers had already destroyed by fire the Bezetha, the Acra, or lower city, and the Temple; and upon the final capture of the upper city, Titus gave orders for the utter demolition of the whole city and Temple, with the exception of the western

¹ Joseph. Wars, B. VI. c. 5 and 6; St. Matt. xxiv. 15; Dan. ix. 27. xii. 11.

² Ibid. B. VI. c. x. § 3.

wall, and three towers between the upper and lower city, which had been built by Herod the Great in so solid a manner, that Titus, upon examining them, exclaimed, "God only could have ejected the Jews from these fortifications¹." These portions served for the use of the tenth legion, which was left in garrison; but the imperial orders were so punctually executed with regard to the remainder, that the foundations of the wall were dug up, and the city was laid even with the ground, and nothing remained to show that it had ever been inhabited². Terentius Rufus was left in command, of whom the Talmudists say, "he ploughed up Zion as a field, and made Jerusalem become heaps³," according to the prophecies; while in this entire destruction Christians perceive the exact fulfilment of our Lord's words:—"There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down⁴."

¹ Joseph. Wars, B. VI. c. 9. The three towers were called the Hippicus, the Phasaelis, and the Mariamne.

² Ibid. B. VII. c. 1.

³ Micah iii. 12. Jer. xxvi. 18. See Whiston's Josephus, B. VII. c. 2. note.

⁴ St. Matt. xxiv. 2. St. Mark xiii. 2. St. Luke xlx. 43, 44.

Thus fell Jerusalem, the city of David, the city of the Sanctuary,—thus fell the Temple, the holy of holies,—with a destruction that has continued irretrievable ; God evidently, and by the confession of the Jews, having deserted his chosen habitation. No Jeremiah poured forth pious lamentations on occasion of this extreme calamity ; no Isaiah disclosed a dawn of future comfort ; no Ezra or Nehemiah have arisen to restore the abode of Judah. Various prodigies are related to have happened about this time at Jerusalem by Josephus ¹, and also by Tacitus : a flaming meteor stood over the city for a year, in shape like a sword ; the eastern gate of the inner court of the Temple, made of brass, and so heavy, that the strength of twenty men was required to shut it, opened of its own accord in the middle of the night ; flaming chariots and troops of armed soldiers were seen moving swiftly in the clouds about sun-set ; at the feast of Pentecost, the priests going by night, according to custom, into the inner Temple, felt a movement like an earthquake, and heard a rushing sound as of a great multitude, saying, “ Let us depart

¹ Wars, B. VI. c. 5. § 3. Tacit. Hist. 5. 13.

hence." For seven years and five months, a man, a peasant, by name Jesus, went about by day and night through the city, uttering one incessant monotonous cry, "woe, woe to Jerusalem." He was threatened, he was severely scourged, but still continued his lamentation. During the siege he cried, "woe to the city, to the people, and to the holy house;" at last he said, "woe to myself also," and at the moment a stone from one of the engines killed him on the spot. These relations are not without a lofty and affecting character, very different from the contemptible notices of the entrails of victims detailed by Suetonius and other Roman authors. The sober-minded Lardner hesitates to admit the reality of these portents at Jerusalem; but he perceives the finger of Providence manifested, not only in the general direction of these momentous events, but also in particular circumstances: for instance ¹, the absence of the plague, notwithstanding the excessive carnage, seems designed to show that the miseries of the Jews were altogether brought on by their own infuriated passions and obstinacy, which administered their own punishment; and the

¹ Credibility, Vol VII. p. 73. 106.

elevation of Vespasian and Titus to the imperial power was a reward of their obedience in executing the Divine will.

The narrative of Josephus, containing very minute details of the memorable siege of Jerusalem, would be considered a curious and important historical document, without reference to the Bible: but we are struck with astonishment at finding a Jew, a contemporary, and conversant with all the circumstances, recording against his countrymen a series of calamities inflicted as judgments upon themselves by their own mistaken zeal and headstrong sedition. He declares, that the insurgents not only provoked the inveterate hostility of the Romans; but, by their tyranny, cruelty, and rapacity, caused more miseries to that generation of the Jews than did the invaders: with pious awe and sorrow, he enumerates various instances of desecration and pollution, with which the Zealots, against their will, and by the force of circumstances which they could not control, defiled the Temple and its holy offices; he relates in detail the manner of the conflagration of the Temple, which took place to the consternation of the besieged of all parties, and against the commands of the Roman emperor, and in spite

of his strenuous efforts for its preservation. Of all these matters, Josephus is a highly competent witness, and his testimony is in this respect above suspicion; while he involuntarily and unconsciously confirms, by the strongest proof of facts, the truth of the Christian prophecies. It is undeniable, that according to their own phraseology, a curse fell upon the Jewish nation, a calamity inflicted by the decree of God as a punishment for sin; and from that day it has not been removed. What the sin was, the Jews have their own opinion; it must have been of the most heinous kind, to judge from the extreme and protracted chastisement, universal among all the race through successive generations: we Christians say the sin was the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah; and in proof of this assertion, we point to the Scriptures, and to facts exemplifying the consistent accomplishment of predictions contained in the word of God.

The ruin of Jerusalem must have had a very great effect in assisting the propagation of the Gospel. This event could not but confirm and encourage Christians to believe in that crucified Saviour, whose words they saw unexpectedly fulfilled, and whose sufferings were thus terribly avenged; it tended to open their minds to under-

stand the true cause of the rejection of the Jews, the entire abolition of the ceremonial law, and the spirituality of the new covenant. Upon the same ground, many Jews must have felt that their nation had acted wrong in revolting against the Roman power, and that the Christians had chosen a better part; and would be led on to a favourable consideration of the Christian interpretation of the holy Scriptures, particularly since God, as a mark of just anger, had permitted the destruction of the Temple, the seat of holiness, and with it the cessation of the great national sacrifices and offerings. The Gentile proselytes, "devout men," would be glad to be relieved from the painful, onerous, and invidious yoke of the Mosaic ritual; while they were allowed and invited to worship the one living God, according to the simplicity of Christian doctrine, in spirit and in truth. We may observe also, that the seditious spirit of the Jews, which was not quelled in Judea even by the capture of Jerusalem, assuming a character of religious zeal, serves in some measure to account for the implacable enmity long exercised by the Romans against the Christians, who were by them considered an obscure Jewish sect, and perhaps confounded with the Zealots, and those furious insurgents,

who from time to time sprung to arms, under the influence of false prophets and false Messiahs.

To ascribe the changes in human affairs too frequently, minutely, and unnecessarily, to Divine interposition, is an error partaking of superstition, and tending to degrade the universal superintendence of Providence to the narrow interested views of individuals and parties : but altogether to reject the notion of such interposition is a still worse fault, arising from presumptuous folly and negligence, from hardened prejudice, from arrogant perverseness of heart and temper. Satan seems to desert his own instruments, when those who turn from a wholesome consolatory belief in the Divine Judgments, and an endeavour to trace them with reasonable reverence, are found to betray occasionally an abject timidity with regard to supernatural impressions, and to sink down on some points into the weakest credulity. Let reason and good sense, implanted in man by God for the guidance of his conduct, decide upon this, as upon other matters, from the evidence and facts adduced. To this test we appeal in the present instance, with confidence that, after careful examination of all the extraordinary coincidences, and connected chain of predictions and

corresponding particular circumstances, which attended the fall of Jerusalem, impartial and sober enquirers will find in this event a powerful confirmation of the truth and Divine origin of the Gospel; and farther, will be impressed with a conviction, that it was intended and calculated to facilitate, in a most eminent degree, the establishment and propagation of Christianity.

The ten years of the reign of Vespasian and his son Titus, whose amiable character deservedly obtained for him the title of “the delight of the human race,” passed away in peace and tranquillity, without the record of any remarkable event in Christian history: we may conclude, that the faith of the Gospel continued to spread imperceptibly under the shadow of a mild, though strong government; and Eusebius states, that after the overthrow of Jerusalem, great¹ numbers of Jews embraced the faith of Christ. The separation from the law of circumcision was farther increased by the taxation, which was particularly oppressive to the Jews, being levied for the rebuilding of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, consumed by fire about eight months before

¹ Μυρίων εκ περιτομης. Hist. L. 3. c. 35.

the burning of the Temple at Jerusalem. Domitian, Vespasian's second son, who succeeded to the throne A.D. 81., formed a disgusting contrast to his father and brother; and seemed determined by his abominable vices, his cowardice, and brutal cruelty, to prove that Nero was not the worst of mankind. The Jews and "those who professed Jewish manners¹," (expressions which point to the Christians,) were exposed to the tyrant's utmost severity, towards the close of his reign, A.D. 95. The apostle John was banished by Domitian to the island Patmos, not far from Ephesus; after his release² he wrote the Apocalypse, a composition of an awful and mysterious character, which successive commentators, almost without number, have attempted with extraordinary labour and ingenuity to explain. Dr. Woodhouse's Dissertation presents safe and reasonable rules for the interpretation of the difficult passages; and to this work, and Mr. Faber's books on the Prophecies, the reader is referred for information. It will be sufficient in this place to confine our observations to one

¹ Suetonius, Nero, § 12; Dion. L. 67. p. 1112; Euseb. L. 3. c. 17, 18.

² Rev. i. 9.

point. We have seen that the Jews, from spiritual blindness, mistook the meaning of the ancient Scriptures, which they had in their hands at the very period they were themselves bringing about the literal, full accomplishment of the word of God, sinfully and to their own destruction : it is therefore possible that a large portion of the visible Church of Christ may fall into similar fatal errors. It cannot be denied that in many parts of the Revelation of St. John religious defections are predicted, to an extreme extent ; and what demands particular attention, the parties offending so grievously are described as unconscious of the offence, having their understandings darkened by ignorance, and their hearts hardened by pride and evil habits. Thus professing Christians may be actuated by an antichristian spirit, and fall into antichristian practices, through diabolical delusion, unawares, without knowing their guilt. It behoves us all to look warily to our own ways, and to compare them continually with the prescribed rules of Holy Writ, the only sure guide of our conduct. We are far from saying the Church of Rome is the only Christian society, upon whom the marks of the sins described in Scripture are found. But as we are bound to give reasons for our consci-

entious separation from her communion, and rejection of her authority, we entreat both those who are for us, and those who are against us, to examine with the care and seriousness the subject requires, the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters of the Revelation, and the corresponding prophecies in the seventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel, with a reference to those particular signs of apostacy enumerated by St. Paul¹, as the worshipping of dead men, the forbidding to marry, and the commanding to abstain from meats—superstitious and idolatrous ordinances introduced in the place of pure faith and holiness. The Scriptures² clearly intimate that the Gospel eventually will be preached to all nations, and as clearly that it will never be universally accepted; that the struggle between grace and nature will continue while man is man; that the power of Satan will, with partial success, always oppose the kingdom of Christ on earth, till time shall be no more. Against this opposition, carried on, not by open violence, but with the most subtle deception and ensnaring seductions, it is our duty to be on our guard: while we acknow-

¹ 1 Tim. iv. Coloss. ii.

² Isaiah xi. 9. Habak. ii. 14. Rev. xx. See Bishop Van Mildert's Boyle Lectures, Sermon XII.

ledge that complete righteousness can only be produced by the Holy Spirit, by a miraculous, not a natural power, such as should cause the ferocious animals to lose their qualities, and make "the leopard lie down with the kid;" still we are assured that our warfare against the evil one, if sincere and hearty on our part, will be crowned with success, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of Christ. In the Apocalypse the Apostle's descriptions of the pouring out of God's indignation in just judgments on a guilty world, are most terrible: they convey ideas to the mind which language cannot express. The earth and its inhabitants seem to melt away before their Maker. Yet an event is there represented much more appalling than the breaking up of the elements, and the destruction and dissolution of the visible creation, namely, the day of judgment. An honest man may remain with an unmoved heart, while the world goes to pieces round him: but who can stand the disclosure of the secrets of all hearts before the Divine tribunal? Who is honest and pure in the sight of God, or can hope to escape eternal punishment, except through the alone merits and mediation of the Saviour Christ?

The date of St. John's Gospel is uncertain; but

there is no doubt it was written after the other Gospels. St. John omits incidents in our Lord's life, which had been related by the other three evangelists, and in other instances supplies what they had passed over : in particular, he is full of assurances that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and asserts, in the clearest manner, his pre-existence and Deity. The other Evangelists are more historical ; St. John is eminently spiritual, and enlarges upon matters of doctrine, in opposition to heresies, which there is ground to believe had sprung up in the Church, upon the points of the creation of the world and the Person of Christ. Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, tells ¹ us, that he wrote to refute the errors of Cerinthus, an Alexandrian Jew, and of others, who depraved Christianity, by mixing with it the fanciful, unintelligible notions of the Gnostics, concerning what, in their jargon, they called the generation of *Æons*. It is clear that the heretics, whom St. John designed to confute, erred concerning the Divine and human natures of Jesus Christ ; for the Apostle insists upon the Godhead, and the real humanity of our Saviour : " These things are

¹ Iren. L. III. c. 11.

written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name¹." Hence we may learn, that it is our duty, in propagating the Gospel, earnestly to maintain this, its essential doctrine; even the love of peace must yield to the paramount obligation of delivering the truth. It has, indeed, been sometimes argued, with a specious appearance of liberality, that the Creed of the Church might be expressed with a latitude of terms, which should prevent contention, by including all those who call themselves Christians. But general propositions, like round numbers, are not exactly true; they only serve to shew whereabouts the truth lies: and any nominal² agreement, which excluded the consideration of vital points of faith, must be hollow and delusive, and contain within itself the germs of dissension. It is better to differ openly, with manly sincerity, where a real difference subsists upon matters of the utmost importance; this is the best principle at once, and the best policy; and let us leave the final decision to "the righteous" Judge. Meanwhile, it may be observed, that the man who has

¹ St. John xx. 31.

² There are some excellent remarks on this subject in Bishop Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures, Sermon V.

no fixed Creed, no settled religious opinions, cannot lay claim to liberality ; for an allowance with regard to the sentiments of others, concerning a matter, to which his mind is altogether indifferent, evidently costs him nothing.

The Epistles of St. John, containing cautions against the errors of those who taught that Christ was a mere man ¹, as the Cerinthians and Ebionites, and on the other hand, of those who asserted that he was man only in appearance, as the Gnostics and the Docetæ, bear internal evidence of authenticity. They shew the affectionate, confiding disposition, that simplicity of meaning and tenderness of heart, which belonged to the disciple "whom Jesus loved." In the Revelation, the Apostle condemns the impurities ² of the Nicolaitans; in the Epistle ³ he states, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous;" setting himself against a sentimental Christianity, he enforces, with characteristic warmth, the great moral precept, that we should love one another, not in word, but in deed. Consistently with such exhortations, St. Jerome relates, that this last of the Apostles, in extreme old age, at

¹ See Dr. Macknight on the Ep. of St. John ; and Mosheim, ante Const. cent. i. c. 70.

² Rev. ii. 14, 15.

³ 1 Ep. iii. 7.

Ephesus, was accustomed to repeat in Christian meetings, "Children, love one another," as the sum of practical virtue. One hundred years afterwards, when the tenets of the Gospel were more generally known, Tertullian¹ appeals to this common observation among the Gentiles, "See how the Christians love one another," as a distinguishing mark of their character. Upon this very important point, is, perhaps, the great failure of Christians in modern times. The dissensions, the controversies, public and private, between individuals and sects, Churches and communities, have brought dishonour upon the Christian name; the inveterate and implacable animosities of Christians, not only turn their thoughts from propagating the Gospel, but stop its progress by becoming, in the eyes of the unconverted, a scandal and reproach to the true faith. Unity and co-operation might do much; but it is too true, that "insuperable² objections exist to combining the efforts of popular societies and pious individuals, under the conduct of a National Church in its corporate form." Notwithstanding, every way, if Christ³ is preached

¹ Tertullian, *Apol. adv. Gentes*. xxxix.

² Townsend, *New Test. Arrang.* Vol. II. p. 721.

³ Philip. i. 18.

in truth, from whatever motive, as regards ourselves, we rejoice and will rejoice.

The last Apostolical Legacy may be said to be a recommendation to unity. Those who break the peace and concord of the Church upon insufficient grounds, or from unworthy motives, incur heavy blame. Union in large societies cannot subsist without authority, and authority implies obedience: ecclesiastical authority is held very high in the writings of the New Testament, and though it may be said it was then administered by persons inspired, yet the Church always possesses, and must possess, that wholesome, lawful power, inherent in all communities, to make laws for her members, which they are in conscience bound to obey. A Christian society will fall into contemptible and ruinous disorder, if there is no sufficient control over vain, tumultuous, and refractory spirits, who differ upon frivolous pretexts, or who plead conscience to indulge their humour, like spoiled children, and upon indifferent matters fly into opposition, such as would be deemed absurd and unbearable in secular business.

Tertullian himself separated from the Church after a time, and joined the Montanists, dissen-

ters who laid claim to superior purity, on the ground of voluntary self-inflicted austerities, and abstinences from unforbidden things; in which respect they greatly resembled the Essenes, a sect among the Jews, described at large by Josephus, of whose peculiarities it has been truly observed, they are almost all condemned, directly or indirectly, in the New Testament. Well-informed principle rejects such obliquities, caused very much by natural temper.

Domitian having been put to death, it may be said, in self-defence by those about him, who feared lest they should become sudden victims of his sanguinary caprice, the Senate ventured to elect Nerva emperor, who was of Cretan extraction. A.D. 96. From his advanced age and mild disposition, this excellent prince was unable to control the tumultuous soldiery, and wisely adopted Trajan as his son and successor, a Spaniard, and the most distinguished general of his time. Willingly we bear our testimony to "the happy and prosperous condition of the Roman world," under these emperors, and their immediate successors, Adrian and the two Antonines; we have no wish to conceal or extenuate the virtues of these heathen rulers, which were the gift of the Author of all goodness, and served in

part to prepare men's minds for the perfect code of moral government exhibited in the Gospel. When the Roman people applauded the sentiment of their dramatic poet, "I am a man, and take an interest in all that concerns humanity," their feelings were gradually made to accord with that purer precept, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" Tertullian claims Seneca as an unconscious co-adjutor of the Christians, and upon the same grounds, when Juvenal stigmatizes the perjury of atheists, and Epictetus commends suffering virtue, we may affirm "they are ours."

The persecutions of the Christians by some of those good emperors are, with difficulty, accounted for. From the memorable letter of Pliny¹ on this subject, and Trajan's answer, we learn that the Christians were charged with obstinacy, rebellion, and the practice of a mischievous superstition, being evidently confounded with the Jews and the Egyptians. We find also from Lucian², that an outcry was sometimes raised against the Christians, classing them with Atheists and Epicureans. Since Christianity,

¹ B. X. Ep. 97. A.D. 112.

² Pseudomant. § 25 and 38. Tom. II. p. 232. 244. ed. Gesner. See Mosheim, cent. ii. § 4.

misunderstood, constituted an object of dislike and mistrust both to the government and the multitude, we may readily suppose the philosophers would view with ill-will an obscure and mean party, who professed to be wiser than the rest of mankind on the subject of religion, particularly if Cicero's ¹ intimation be true, that the philosophers were proverbially unbelievers. In fact, the popular superstitions were at the time so unreasonable in themselves, attended with such unmeaning mummeries, and contemptible observances, that men of reflection found it impossible to believe in the current system of mythology, and were driven into atheism, or found refuge in those natural impressions of the Deity, which have never been quite obliterated from the human mind. At the period we are considering, the great object of idolatrous worship was the imperial power, represented by the image of the reigning emperor. It is indeed astonishing to observe from history, how often

¹ Eos, qui philosophiæ dent operam, non arbitrari Deos esse.—De Invent. lib. I. c. 29. It may also be remarked that, instead of a self-complacent feeling of superiority, fostered by philosophy, Christianity teaches humility and repentance, and that each individual must begin the task of reformation at home, and first amend his own life, before he enters upon the business of instructing others,

the world has fallen into the profanation of paying Divine honour to human nature ; this seduction the great tempter seems to have reserved as his chief delusion in ages of refinement, after mankind have emerged from savage manners, gross ignorance, and the most debasing superstitions. Under various specious pretexts of power, of virtue, of benefits conferred upon the world, of philosophy and superior attainments of knowledge, men administer to themselves the impious self-flattery of the deification of mortality ; the worshipper complacently offering adoration to a Being like himself, of the same passions, and subject to the like infirmities.

Notwithstanding all the obstacles, prejudices, and persecutions which Christianity had to encounter, it grew mightily and prevailed. Of this encrease Pliny's letter.¹ affords ample proof in these words : " Many persons of every age, of every rank, and of both sexes, are liable to be called to account ; for this superstition has spread like a contagion into cities, towns, and villages, so that the temples have been forsaken, and purchasers for the sacrifices almost ceased."

¹ Lib. X. Ep. 97.

In what manner this extension of the Gospel was conducted, what means were employed to produce this effect, it is our business to enquire, for the sake of instruction, for our guidance and imitation. Doubtless this extraordinary success must be mainly attributed to the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost, and to the miraculous powers confided to the Church; but still the primitive records furnish lessons and examples of human wisdom and virtue worthy of all attention from posterity.

We are now arrived at the period when the Sacred Volume closes; and the inexperienced reader who looks for immediate accounts of the farther propagation of the Gospel, will be liable to surprise and disappointment. No distinct details remain of efforts directed to this end; there are no histories of early missions or missionaries. We find the Gospel established and flourishing in certain places, but of the manner in which it was first there planted, and by whose hands, few or no traces are left: only some few scanty notices on this subject appear thinly scattered on the surface of the vast sea of ecclesiastical antiquity. Eusebius ¹, treating of the time

¹ Lib. III. c. 37.

of Trajan, A.D. 100, states that the successors of the apostles laboured to establish the Churches which they had founded, and also went into foreign countries, performing the works of Evangelists, being zealous to preach Christ, and to spread the writings of the Holy Gospel." The tradition runs, that St. Mark founded the Church at Alexandria; and in the second century, "Pantænus, who presided with great reputation over the catechetical school in that city, from alacrity of spirit and affection for the Divine Word, went on a mission to preach the Gospel of Christ to the nations of the East, as far as the country of the Indians. For there were, adds the historian ¹, at that time many Evangelists of the Word, inspired with a holy zeal to imitate the apostles in spreading and establishing Christianity." The Indians here mentioned probably lived not very far to the East. Mosheim ² contends that they were Jews of Arabia Felix, because Pantænus found among them some Christians and the Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew, which had been left according to tradition by the apostle Bartholomew. St. Jerome ³ relates

¹ Euseb. L. 5. c. 10.

² Mosheim, *De Rebus ante Constant.* p. 176.

³ *Catal. Script. Eccles.* cap. 36. p. 107. edit. Fabric.

that these Indians, wheresoever situated, sent deputies to Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, to ask for a Christian teacher; who accordingly commissioned Pantænus to that service.

The Churches at Lyons and Vienne were persecuted in the seventeenth year of the reign of Marcus Antoninus, A.D. 177, and sent a relation of the sufferings of their martyrs to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia in a letter, which has been ascribed to Irenæus¹, and which Dr. Lardner deems the finest thing of the kind in all antiquity. Of the origin of these eminent Gallic Churches there is no clear account: but from the address of this letter, from the names of Pothinus, the first Bishop of Lyons, and of Irenæus his successor, who² describes himself to have been a disciple of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, it is reasonably inferred they were founded by Asiatic Greeks. Probably there was a regular commercial intercourse between Smyrna and Lyons. From Lyons³ Christianity would gradually spread itself into Britain, and across the Rhine to Germany.

From slight beginnings of this kind, of which

¹ Eusebius, L. V. c. 1.

² Irenæus, *adv. Hæres.* L. III. c. 3. S. 4.

³ Mosheim, *ante Const.* p. 207.

the vestiges are effaced, the Christian faith spread so rapidly and extensively as to excite the wonder of friends and enemies ¹ at the time, and to call for a devout and grateful acknowledgment of Divine interposition from posterity. The reader cannot fail to observe also the silent growth of the new religion, its insensible, imperceptible operation, accurately predicted in the lively image of our Lord's parable ², before quoted: "neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God who giveth the increase." This secret progress was designed, we may presume, to prove manifestly to mankind that the Gospel is the work not of man, but of God, who gave an impulse to its early promotion, like the hidden, but certain, constant, and uncontrollable powers of nature. To the same Divine interposition, and heavenly influence, Christians must always humbly look, as they hope any success will attend their well-intentioned but feeble efforts in this sacred cause. We must piously confess, that "except the Lord build the house, the labour of the builder is but lost;" we must pray for the guidance, support, and comfort of

¹ Plin. Ep. X. 97; Lucian in Alex. c. 25; Gibbon, c. 25.

² Mark iv. 26.

the Holy Spirit, both upon those who preach and those who hear, or we can expect no proficiency, no return for the seed sown : and those who are most lowly in their own estimation, and do all in dependence upon Divine aid, will be the persons most likely to exert themselves to the utmost in doing sincerely the work of an Evangelist, with a due mixture of zeal and prudence.

The primitive Christians seem to have considered the whole inhabited globe, as far as they were acquainted with it, an open field for their exertions, in which it was their duty to labour for the eternal welfare of their fellow-men. Justin Martyr¹ and Irenæus², in the second century, and Tertullian³ in the third, state in positive terms, that the knowledge and faith of Christ had spread among all nations throughout the whole world. Though their expressions cannot be taken literally, but must be understood with allowance, still they could not have been used by those authors, unless it had been

¹ Dial. cum Tryphon, p. 341, ed. Jebb.

² Irenæus, L. I. c. 10, p. 48. ed. Massnet.

³ Tertullian, adv. Judæos, c. 7. p. 212. ed. Rigalt.

See the Eccles. Hist. of the Second and Third Centuries, illustrated from the writings of Tertullian, by the Bishop of Lincoln, p. 91.

notorious in their time that very great and successful exertions were employed for propagating Christianity.

This subject is illustrated by the following judicious remark of Dr. Middleton¹, the late excellent Bishop of Calcutta, who well knew and practised primitive Christianity: "The diffusion of Christianity was not considered in the early times as an object altogether distinct from its general maintenance among believers, but in some way or other both were provided for in one common system of discipline; and thus the propagation of religion would only be an expansion of the Catholic Church." In these pious efforts the laity would co-operate with the clergy; many of them being fresh converts, would naturally give reasons to their friends for their change of opinion, and would feel stimulated to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour by consistent lives, and to induce others to embrace truths which examination and mature reflection had convinced them were essential to human happiness. In the same way the Gospel has been in a degree propagated, by the blessing of God, among the heathen in the British settlements in

¹ Charge for the year 1819, p. 14, 15.

modern times ; and we have the satisfaction of knowing that wheresoever the English language is spoken, some attempt has been made to extend Christianity. No other miracle is now to be expected, except the manifest conversion of men from wickedness to holiness, from the engrossing pursuit of worldly temporal objects to spiritual and eternal concerns : if the heathen can once be brought to consider within themselves, “ these Christians are good men ; we see that their lives are regulated by precepts of piety, honesty, temperance, and charity,” the business of conversion is half done ; they will readily be led on to think favourably of, and to receive as true, doctrines which produce such visible good effects. Especially Christians who hold high offices and influential stations in heathen countries, have an opportunity of letting their light shine before men to the glory of God, and by their conspicuous example of turning many to righteousness. If that opportunity should be neglected, if instead of glorying in the cross of Christ, they seem ashamed of their Master, surely they incur a perilous responsibility : if by oppression and fraud, they seek to gratify an inordinate love of gain, or pursue, with cruelty and tyranny, a reckless career of

ambition, or wallow in voluptuousness, they dishonour the faith which they profess. Gentlemen and Englishmen, in whatever part of the world their lot may be thrown, feel an honourable and virtuous impulse to sustain a character worthy of their race and country, being desirous that names generally illustrious and distinguished may not lose credit, and be degraded, particularly among strangers, by their individual acts : a spirit of the same kind, but in degree more pure and elevated, ought to actuate Christians, impelling them on all occasions to remember their vocation, and to obtain for it a good report from those who are without. The effect of making Christianity to be well thought of by the heathen, cannot be produced by precise unnatural formality on indifferent matters, by harsh censures, by threats, by precipitate and compulsory measures, shocking to their prejudices ; but should rather be attempted with gentleness and persuasion, by opening their minds to a reasonable consideration of the Scriptures, and above all by the moral magnetism of example. The truth is, Christians make Christians ; and if Christianity be represented in the lives of its professors, according to the beautiful

and attractive excellence of the model proposed in the word of God, it will, under Divine Providence, make its own way in the world.

The primitive times supply high authorities in confirmation of these observations : Justin Martyr ¹ informs us, that having remarked the virtues of the Christians, their silent patience and cheerful fortitude under persecution, he was induced to leave the Platonic philosophy for those evangelical principles which evidently inspired stronger motives to good actions. Cyprian ² also relates, that he first began to think the Gospel divine, by observing, that persons influenced by it were converted from vice to virtue, from luxury, vain splendour, and the pursuits of unprincipled ambition, to temperance, sober-mindedness, and the enjoyment of a quiet contented life. What he had approved in others, he practised in his own instance, renouncing wealth and worldly distinction, to devote himself entirely to the service of Christ. The primitive Church may be said to speak in the language of her apologist, "Our business is not to talk, but to live." A man may well feel himself unfit to recommend

¹ Ed. 1686, p. 50.

² Ad Donatum.

to others, almost to praise, such examples; but “the words of the wise are as goads” to excite us to advance in Christian proficiency.

Other methods employed in propagating the Gospel remain to be considered, and claim our especial notice, because, as they do not relate to the exercise of miraculous powers, they may be imitated by us, and also are applicable to the times we live in. On this account, it is hoped the mention of them here will be excused, although in strict chronology, they belong to an age later than the first century. Bishop Kaye¹ agrees with Mosheim, in noticing two powerful engines set at work to promote the diffusion of the Gospel: the translation of the New Testament into different languages, and the composition of numerous apologies for the Christian faith. The ample observations of these authors, on both subjects, would only be weakened by being partially transferred to these pages: it is sufficient for our purpose, to note that the dissemination of the Scriptures, and the simplicity, clearness, and force, of the early apologies, must

¹ Ec. Hist. illustrated from Tertullian, p. 113. Mosheim Cent. 2. p. 1. c. 1.

have had a mighty effect in dissipating the Gentile prejudices against Christianity, by shewing that it had nothing in common with the seditious, rebellious spirit of the Jews, or their bigoted attachment to legal ceremonies, and that, instead of being a noxious superstition upheld by a contemptible sect, it was in reality, of all religions the most reasonable and beneficial, maintained by persons of peaceable behaviour and consummate virtue. In reference to this subject, we would wish to point the reader's attention to the very great advantage to be derived from human learning in propagating the Gospel. By means of book-learning, and the study of the best or classical authors in all languages, the treasures of knowledge stored up for ages are made our own; distinguished personages long dead become, in a manner, our companions, we gather instruction from the records of their wisdom and experience, which contain a history for studying human nature. On the other hand, the arts and sciences, useful in the common affairs of life, may be learned to perfection, without affording any knowledge of mankind, of moral obligations, or religious duties; their view takes in a comparatively narrow horizon. The Bible cannot be well understood or explained, without profane

learning, which is never so useful as in the service of religion ; and whenever the Gospel has degenerated, either into superstitious tyranny, or wild, vulgar fanaticism, it has been in times of ignorance, careless of the liberal learning to be derived from books.

“ We¹ may depend upon it, no truth, no matter of fact fairly laid open, can ever subvert true religion.” Undoubtedly heresies sprung up in the primitive times, having their origin in the Oriental and Platonic philosophies ; but the remedy to these errors, the remedy applied by the Christian apologists, was not to discard all human learning and philosophy, but to bring forward sound, true, real knowledge, in aid of religion. This was done in an eminent degree by Origen, who may be termed the father of Biblical erudition. This extraordinary man² tamed his bold and fertile genius to habits of indefatigable study, while he steadily employed the results of all his scholarship to advance the Christian cause, adorning a life of firm and irreproachable virtue, with modesty and temper. In

¹ Bentley.

² Eusebius, L. I. c. 21. 23. 36. and L. VI. c. 30.

consequence of his great reputation, young men of talents and of good family, resorted to his residence at Alexandria, to place themselves under his tuition, and while they sought secular knowledge, were won over to Christianity ; the empress Mamæa invited him to her court at Antioch, and many ladies and officers of the imperial household were gradually converted. Thus was the influence of learning joined to the true religion, and can never be safely separated from it. It may, indeed, be stated, that the same proficiency in human knowledge, and the same application of it to sacred purposes, marked the characters of Moses, and Solomon, and the Apostle Paul.

Origen, it seems, was accustomed to say¹, “ that, strictly speaking, true piety could not subsist without learning and philosophy.” His powers and attainments were eminently called into action in refuting the infidel Celsus, who adopted an opinion too prevalent in our day, that men are to be left to themselves on the

¹ Οὐ τοίνυν οὐδὲ εὐσεβεῖν ὅλως δυνατὸν εἶναι ἔφασκεν, ὁρῶς λέγων, μὴ φιλοσοφῆσαντι. Greg. Orat. paneg. ad Origen. See Lardner's Credibility, Vol. III. p. 27.

subject of religion, and are to be suffered, or rather encouraged, in this particular alone to follow the customs of their forefathers, while in all other branches of education and mental cultivation they are to aim strenuously at reforms and improvements which may exalt their condition to a superiority over preceding ages. According to this system, the single study which deserves to remain stationary and disregarded is religious knowledge ; in a word, it is a scheme for trying with how little religion the world can go on, which has been at different periods suggested by the author of evil, and especially we may observe in times of the greatest refinement : when the human mind has, by exercise and study, had its powers invigorated and enlightened to attain an extraordinary degree of excellence, and it seems to be just on the point of perfection, some Sisyphean force suddenly carries it down again to the original low level of ignorance and obscurity, and succeeding generations have to begin over again the laborious task of instruction.

We may affirm the truth of the converse of Origen's proposition, that religion is necessary to learning, which, without good principles of action, degenerates into useless or mischievous knowledge, and becomes an injurious power.

The schools and universities of this realm have been instituted to preserve an inseparable connexion between piety and knowledge, that both may advance with united progress, a mutual support and ornament, for the benefit of mankind. By the continual blessing of Providence upon persons, who have, in a long successive series, employed themselves with virtue, diligence, and capacity, in the business of education, these noble institutions have well done their work, by giving knowledge to those who have a zeal for piety, and by putting philosophy under the guidance of religion, as the beginning of wisdom. They have extended their sphere of usefulness, by occasionally supplying Christian teachers, duly qualified for instructing the heathen world; witness such names as Middleton and Heber. Perhaps the business of propagating the Gospel might be prosecuted by the Universities upon a more systematic plan, as a body, by educating young men expressly for the office of missionaries, by supplying them with moderate salaries, and exercising a superintendence over their exertions, without interfering with episcopal jurisdiction. An established Church, with parochial ministers, regularly distributed in settled residences, is, of all other human means, the

best polity for keeping up religious instruction ; but still we are not to despise too much the system of itinerant ministers, with temporary commissions, which, besides the sanction of the most sacred authority, is recommended by the successful practice of the best times. Thus Origen¹ states, that “ Christians are not negligent to sow the Word throughout the world : some have made it their business to go round, not only through cities, but also to villages and hamlets, in order to instruct others, and make them fit worshippers of God ; nor can any one allege that they do this for the sake of gain, for they do not accept even a subsistence, except in cases of necessity.”

Very extensive and permanent results are not to be expected from the single, insulated, desultory efforts of individual teachers, however zealous, and however able. Upon this point we shall do well to consider that our Lord sent forth the twelve² and the seventy, “ by two and

¹ Τινές ἔργον πεποιήνται ἐκ περιέρχεσθαι οὐ μόνον πόλεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ κώμας, καὶ ἐπαύλεις, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους εὐσεβεῖς τῷ Θεῷ κατασκευάσωσι· καὶ οὐκ ἂν πλούτου τις ἕνεκα φῆσαι αὐτοὺς τοῦτο πράττειν ἕσθ' ὅτε μὲν οὐδὲ τὰ πρὸς τροφήν παραλαμβάνοντα.

—Contra Celsum, L. III. p. 116.

² Mark vi. 7. Luke x. 1.

two," to teach repentance, and cast out devils; that the succeeding commissions for preaching the Gospel, recorded in the New Testament; whether coming immediately from the Holy Ghost, or through the channel of human appointment, are given usually to more than one person; and that it was the practice of the apostles to perform this duty in conjunction with others, and to travel with companions. Farther; the apostles were accustomed to visit new converts, in order to confer spiritual gifts by the imposition of their hands, and by repeated examinations, and exhortations to strengthen their faith and regulate their practice with indefatigable vigilance, as faithful and diligent overseers of Christ's flock. To these facts must be added, in corroboration, the continued injunctions upon Christians, to maintain among themselves, not merely union and concord as a matter of expediency, but to cherish brotherly affection and love, from motives of duty; the exercise of these feelings being considered the test of their sincerity, and earnest of their future blessed reward. In a word, without union there can be no Christianity; without united efforts, systematically pursued, and supported by powerful and influential bodies of Christians at home, there can be no

hope of spreading the faith of the Gospel largely among the heathen. This is one of the human means which Providence has made indispensable to the end, as far as we can judge from doctrine and experience. The beneficial effects of such a system, we gratefully acknowledge in the successful labours of the Incorporated Society for Propagating the Gospel, which by Divine blessing, has contributed, during the last century, to the wide diffusion of Christianity in the British settlements in the West Indies, in America, and in the East. An individual missionary may meet with insurmountable obstacles, may fail by his own mismanagement, may be stopped by disease and death; but the society, with unceasing superintendence, is ready to supply deficiencies, to meet emergencies, to repair errors, and by a steady uniform course of action, directed to one and the same object, never relaxes entirely from the effort to make an impression upon the heathen in favour of Christianity.

As unity of effort, on the part of numbers, is necessary to the extensive success of individuals, so on the other hand, no human system, however well devised, can prosper, unless duly supported by the personal character of its ministers.

If there be a separation of virtue from ability, of zeal from discretion, in the qualifications of Christian teachers, discredit and failure must inevitably be the harvest reaped by those, who, perhaps, with the very best intentions, inadvertently commit the highest interests to incapable and unworthy delegates. Personal character, founded on consistent, useful, and disinterested virtue, will have weight among the civilized and the uncivilized ; as gratitude for benefits received is the only moral feeling, which appears to be universally recognized even among the most savage and barbarous nations. The apostolic Schwartz, all the circumstances of his peculiar situation being considered, presents, perhaps, the most enviable example, which can anywhere be found, of the respect and confidence inspired by personal character.

Instances might be adduced of Christian teachers, who have considered themselves entitled, as God's messengers, to assume a tone of authority over the persons and consciences of the heathen. Such exercise of power is not warranted in the New Testament ; nor is the practice there recommended of preaching to the ignorant without preparation, the high and mysterious doctrines of the Gospel, under an impres-

sion, that sudden light from heaven would necessarily accompany the instruction, and convey at once a capacity and will to receive it. Religious knowledge is generally communicated, like other kinds of education, by winning the confidence and regard of the pupil, by endeavouring to make an impression in early and tender years, before the young mind is pre-engaged in other and worse pursuits; by awakening the attention of those of mature age, and gradually instilling good doctrine, as their understandings are opened, and their hearts softened, by its increasing influence upon them, and the evidence of its beneficial tendency. The Almighty himself “drew the Israelites with the cords of a man, with bands of love ¹.”

Some persons ², and of high authority, have supposed that a previous degree of civilization

¹ Hosea xi. 4.

² “Sir Stamford Raffles always conceived that the idea of converting the natives of India by preaching was fallacious, and that the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which attended the first preaching of the Gospel, was not now to be expected. It was his conviction that the best means of securing this object, was to civilize and instruct the people.”—*Life*, p. 585.

was absolutely necessary, by way of preparation for the Gospel. Without acceding to this opinion in its full extent, we may remark that a communication of the arts and sciences, which add to the convenience and comforts of human life, and lighten its distresses and afflictions, must obviously possess a powerful influence over men in a state of natural ignorance. The effects produced upon the materials within their reach by the dexterity of the carpenter and the smith, with the contrivances of their tools, and the skill of the medical practitioner in curing wounds, and remedying internal disorders, appear to the uninformed almost miraculous, and exceeding the bounds of merely human exertion. To teachers so much their superiors in handicraft, so competent to confer visible palpable benefits in an unexpected, and to them incomprehensible manner, they naturally listen with the more readiness upon spiritual concerns, convinced already that they are their masters in important knowledge of a temporal kind. The great advantages of this method of facilitating the introduction of Christianity appear from Latrobe's excellent account of the Moravian settlements at the Cape of Good Hope, and from Mr. Ellis's new and very interesting work, entitled *Polynesian Researches*. Every Christian

must bestow the mite of his commendation upon those missionaries, who, leaving their native country, and the comforts it affords, have fixed their abode with their families in a distant land, among foreigners, a rude and barbarous race, for the purpose of educating them by slow degrees, and with infinite labour, and the most patient gentleness, first of all in the knowledge of things pertaining to this life, with the farther and more important object of making converts to the faith of Christ, and proceeding full of hope, hand in hand with these new companions, through the changes of this mortal existence, in pursuit of the Saviour's eternal inheritance. Doubtless the reward of such good and faithful servants will be great; their works will follow them.

It may be observed, in conclusion, that peculiar facilities present themselves to the English nation at this time for carrying on the propagation of the Gospel, from the power and influence exercised by this country in all quarters of the globe, and arising in a great degree from its peaceable commercial intercourse, and maritime superiority. The public mind has been awakened to the importance of this object, proofs of which

appear in the large annual funds voluntarily contributed, both for the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures in all languages, and for the support of Christian missions. We may add, that the character of the national Church of England is calculated to allay jealousies, because it assumes no secular power, independent of the State. The improvements in navigation make communications with all parts of the world comparatively easy ; as the art of printing spreads knowledge from mind to mind with a celerity unknown in the primitive age. All these great powers and instruments for good it remains for Englishmen, under Providence, to direct well with united persevering efforts, and by the employment of duly qualified ministers, to extend the faith of Christ. If there be any truth in the early records we have been examining, nations contract guilt before God, like individuals, and punishments fall as judgments upon whole communities for common offences of magnitude. If the advantages and opportunities enjoyed by the English people are wasted, or overlooked, in a perpetual struggle for greater temporal acquisitions ; if their only desire and occupation is temporal prosperity, that which Scripture terms "covetousness," continual gain, instead of content

and satisfaction, and gratitude for benefits received, both worldly and spiritual, in abundant measure, and a dutiful impression of the obligation imposed upon them to communicate these blessings to others; we cannot suppose the Almighty will suffer such selfish disobedience to his plain commands to pass with impunity.

Farther reflections suggest themselves, but this work is already too long: its object will have been accomplished, if some readers are induced to take a lively interest in Christian missions, and to think for themselves upon the means they individually possess towards performing the duty incumbent upon all Christians, of endeavouring to assist in propagating the Gospel.

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APPENDIX.

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AFTER Cimon had defeated the Persians in the naval engagement off Cyprus, B.C. 450, obtaining a renown fully equal to that of his father, Miltiades, it is said that King Artaxerxes found himself forced to enter into a treaty with the Athenians upon very disadvantageous conditions. Two of the conditions are thus stated: "That no Persian ship of war should appear on any of those seas which lie from the Cyanean to the Chelidonian Islands; that is, from the Euxine Sea to the Coasts of Pamphylia, almost opposite Cyprus; and that no Persian commander should come with an army by land within three days' journey of those seas," or a horseman's journey of one day, sixty miles.—Prideaux's *Connex. An.* 499.

The historian Mitford thinks the evidence of this treaty insufficient: the terms are given, as above, by Plutarch, in the life of Cimon; and, more vaguely, by the older historian Diodorus Siculus, B. XII.

It has been ingeniously conjectured, that, in consequence of this treaty, construed to include the Seas of

Palestine, Jerusalem was fortified by the Persian monarch, being a town situated just beyond the prescribed limits.—See the Analysis of Chronology by Dr. Hales, Vol. II. p. 485; a work, in which is collected together, with vast industry, a prodigious mass of facts, and of erudition bearing upon them.

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“The narrow, distrustful spirit, equally of oligarchy and democracy, which had superseded the tempered monarchies of elder times, had, by degrees, insulated almost every township. Among the Greeks, there was a prevailing partiality for this sullen, unsocial, illiberal, unprofitable independency.”—Mitford's *Greece*, ch. 26, §. 2.

This mischievous spirit prevented all useful co-operation, producing, not the fruits of regulated liberty, but bitter jealousies, more pernicious than tyranny to the happiness and strength of the Grecian states. It was allayed, only for a time, by the united influence of Aristides and Themistocles; whose characters, by a rare union, combined honesty with consummate but unscrupulous ability. The same impracticable distrust prevented the good effects of the noble action of the Proconsul Flaminius, in proclaiming entire liberty to Greece at the Isthmian Games, B.C. 196. The intelligence was received with rapturous acclamations; but the old dissensions were soon fomented in particular quarters, and the consequent weakness of the country exposed it to foreign

invaders. Thus are the unavoidable evils, which God has permitted or appointed in the natural course of the world, aggravated by the misconduct of men themselves, by their mutual injuries, their vicious passions, and obstinate perseverance in doing wrong. The observation forced itself upon the heathens, that mankind make their own miseries, over and above the allotted destiny of their condition.

ὦ πόποι, ὅλον δὴ νῦν θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιώωνται·
 Ἐξ ἡμέων γάρ φασι κακ' ἐμμέναι, οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
 Σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν.

Odyss. A. 32.

“ Perverse mankind ! with wills created free,
 Who charge their woes on absolute decree ;
 All to the dooming gods their guilt translate,
 And follies are miscall'd the crimes of Fate.”

POPE.

“ Alas ! how prone are human-kind to blame
 The Powers of Heaven ! From us, they say, proceed
 The ills which they endure, yet more than Fate
 Herself inflicts, by their own crimes incur.”

COWPER.

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After the defeat of Antiochus the Great, the power of the Romans became so formidable in Asia, that some of the inhabitants, with extravagant, impious flattery, dedicated temples to the city Rome, as to a goddess. For instance, the people of Alabanda, Livy, Lib. XLIII. c. 6; and those of Smyrna, Tacitus, Annal. IV. 56.

See Hooke's Roman History, B. V. c. 17, with the quotation of Sir W. Raleigh's appropriate remarks.

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This is the noted passage of the heathen Macrobius, who lived about A.D. 400, on the subject of the murder of the infants at Bethlehem: "Cum audisset Augustus inter pueros, quos in Syriâ Herodes rex Judæorum intra bimatum jussit interfici, filium quoque ejus occisum, ait, Melius est Herodis porcum esse quam filium; *ὁν ἢ υἷόν.*" Macrobius, Sat. L. II. c. 4. The deaths of the Bethlehem infants and of Herod's son, happened about the same time.

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Mr. Townsend advocates Lord Barrington's opinion, (Miscell. Sacra.) that there were two sorts of proselytes, in opposition to Dr. Lardner. Without entering into the dispute about the term "Proselytes of the Gate," we may agree with the author of this valuable work generally, "that in the time of the Apostles there were a large class of persons, who were neither Jews nor idolatrous Gentiles. Such persons seem to have been contemplated and provided for in Solomon's prayer and dedication of the Temple, 1 Kings viii. 41, and they gradually constituted, by Divine Providence, an intermediate body, prepared to receive the Gospel, and extend it among the Heathen; their chief seat being

at Antioch, which city St. Paul visited as regularly as Jerusalem, in the circuit of his journeys. New Test. arranged, Vol. II. c. x. p. 115, and c. xi. p. 182.

Josephus relates that under the later Syrian kings, the Jews enjoyed equal privileges with the Greek settlers at Antioch: living there in tranquillity, and more numerous than in any city out of Judea; they built a magnificent synagogue or temple, and made continually many proselytes, who became in a manner part of their own body. Wars, B. VII. c. 3. §. 3.

In another part, Josephus states that the women of Damascus were greatly devoted to the Jewish religion. Wars, B. II. c. 20. §. 2.

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“The first Bishops in the Church of Christ were his blessed Apostles, for the office whereunto Matthias was chosen, the sacred history terms *Επισκοπην*, an episcopal office. St. Cyprian says, ‘*Apostolos, id est, episcopus et præpositos Dominus elegit.*’—Cypr. L. III. Epist. 9. They who were termed Apostles, as being sent of Christ to publish his Gospel throughout the world, and likewise Bishops, because the care of government was also committed to them, did no less perform the offices of their episcopal authority by governing, than of their apostolical by teaching. They were Bishops at large.”

“Notwithstanding our Saviour’s commandment to them all, to go and preach unto all nations, some restraint was made, when by agreement between Peter and Paul, moved

with those effects of their labours which the Providence of God brought forth, the one betook himself unto the Gentiles, the other to the Jews, for the exercise of that office of every where preaching. Gal ii. 8. In like manner James, who is called the brother of our Lord, and the Just, was made Bishop of Jerusalem, with restraint, (limited to that particular charge;) whose consecration to that Mother-See of the world, because it was not meet that it should at any time be left void of some Apostle, seems to have been the very cause of St. Paul's miraculous vocation to make up the number of the twelve again, for the gathering of nations abroad, even as the martyrdom of the other James, the brother of John, the reason why Barnabas in his stead was called. Acts xii. 2; xiii. 2. Finally, Apostles, whether they did settle in any one certain place, as James, or else did otherwise as the Apostle Paul, episcopal authority, either at large or with restraint, they had and exercised; their episcopal power they sometimes gave unto others, to exercise as agents only, in their stead, and as it were by commission from them. Thus Titus, and thus Timothy at the first, though afterwards indeed, with apostolical authority of their own¹.—Hooker, Eccles. Polity. B. VII. §. 4.

¹ “The Apostle called the Elders of Ephesus before him as far as to Miletus, Acts xx. 17, nearly fifty miles; and afterwards left Timothy in his place, with his authority and instructions for ordaining ministers there, 1 Tim. v. 22, and for proportioning their maintenance, ver. 17, 18; and for judicial hearing of accusations brought against them, ver. 19; and for holding them in a uniformity of doctrine, ch. i. ver. 3.”

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The Jerusalem decree enjoins an abstinence "from pollutions of idols, and from fornication," as well as "from things strangled and from blood," thus inculcating substantial holiness, while it abolished the necessity of circumcision. . Prostitution and idolatry went together in the Heathen worship. We read in Deuteronomy, xxiii. 17, "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel." So much more pure has the code of moral virtue always been under the true religion than in any other system.

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"So commanding is the view of Jerusalem afforded in this situation (from the Mount of Olives,) that the eye roams over all the streets and around the walls, as if in the survey of a plan or model of the city. The most conspicuous object is the Mosque erected upon the site and foundations of the Temple of Solomon."—Clarke's Travels in 1812, Part II. p. 572, c. 17.

The most particular description of Jerusalem is in that excellent work, Reland's Palestine, Vol. II. p. 832. The perpendicular height of Mount Moriah (on which the Temple stood), above the brook Cedron, does not appear. Josephus gives so precise an account of the whole circuit of the Vallum raised by Titus, that its course might easily be traced now, by the natural marks of the spot,

and measured according to Maundrell's simple, but very satisfactory method, by pacing. "The wall went along the valley of Cedron to the Mount of Olives; it then bent towards the south, and encompassed the mountain as far as the rock Peristereon," (Station for Doves), &c. —Whiston's Joseph. Wars, B. V. c. 12. § 2.

The words "encompassed the mountain," περιελάβει τὸ ὄρος, are not found, according to Havercamp, in some copies. At all events, the Vallum could not have been carried over the top of the Mount of Olives, but must have skirted round the base, near the brook Cedron. On one occasion, the Jews sallied out and tried to break through, or force a way over, the wall, to make an attack on the Roman guard stationed upon the Mount of Olives. They were soon driven back to the town, without effecting their object. Pedanius, a Roman horseman, bending himself down from his horse, caught by the ankle a stout young Jew, as he was running away, and lifting him up, in his armour, with his right hand, by main strength, carried him captive into the presence of Titus."—Wars, B. VI. c. ii. § 8.

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"The plan of the Jewish history commences with the call of Abraham, is sustained by the theocracy of the Hebrew state introduced by Moses, is gradually developed by subsequent occurrences, and finally brought to perfection by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. It is a plan which man could never have devised, nor have pro-

secuted without interruption, through so many ages, nor have finally executed, in so remarkable a manner, with such important results, and to so great an extent.

“ Undoubtedly, the blessing promised to Abraham and his seed is to be understood (not of temporal prosperity, but) of a happiness which consists in the knowledge of the true God and of religion.

“ Prophecies are, for the most part, like views and paintings in perspective, where the nearer objects in the foreground appear in a strong light, but the more distant objects are gradually obscured, and finally lost in the shade, which is dispelled only by approaching them : as, in this case, the promise of a son by Sarah, and of a numerous posterity, is clear and definite ; that of the possession of Canaan, and of the preservation of the true religion, is expressed in more general terms ; while that of the blessing upon all nations, as the most distant, is almost entirely concealed in the shade ; but the history of its fulfilment by Jesus Christ, has dispelled the darkness, and brought the prediction clearly to view. Not only Christians esteem themselves blessed by Jesus, the seed of Abraham, but Mohammedans also are blessed with a knowledge of the true God, by means of the posterity of Abraham.”

These extracts are from “ the History of the Hebrew Commonwealth,” translated from the German of Dr. Jahn of Vienna, (Vol. II. p. 199) ; a laborious compilation, in the form of Annals, and very useful as a book of reference.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews continued

their fierce commotions. In the reign of Trajan, A.D. 116, they committed extensive massacres in Egypt and Cyprus, and were punished with corresponding rigour; and in Adrian's reign, the whole nation were excited to rebellion, under the false Messiah, the famous Baruchab. Adrian rebuilt Jerusalem, A.D. 135, giving it the name of *Ælia Capitolina*, and prohibiting any Jew from approaching it; but the Christians, then at last distinctly separated from the Jews, found within the rising town a peaceful asylum. As if to mark, in a signal manner, the Divine interposition, the history of the Jews proves that they were, as a nation, most zealous, most numerous, and most warlike, at the time when they were defeated and driven from their country by the Romans; and as far as appears, no power inferior to Rome, which possessed universal dominion, could have accomplished their complete overthrow.

Farther particulars are given in the Appendix to Dr. Jahn's work, consisting of a translation from Basnage.

"The History of the Jews" in the Family Library, is well known to convey useful information in an agreeable style; but serious objections have been, with too much justice, urged against the theology. Certainly this proposition comes out as an inference from the whole narrative, that after all the deductions, plausible or otherwise, of scepticism, enough remains to prove substantially, the truth of the Mosaic history, and the Divine inspiration of the Scripture doctrines. Still it is to be much regretted, that in a popular work, without occasion, hints and suggestions should be scattered, sowing the seed of

doubts upon sacred subjects, the growth of which may be, beyond calculation, extensive and injurious.

Certain sceptical theories are, it seems, the importation of a foreign school, which pares down the standard of inspiration to a very low measure indeed, changing the plain meaning of the Scriptures, and using reason, not to explain the difficulties of the word of God, but to reduce it, as much as may be, to the level of a human authority. *Quanto rectius hic, qui nil molitur ineptè !* "I hold it for a most infallible rule, in expositions of Sacred Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changes the meaning of words; as alchemy doth or would do the substance of metals; maketh of any thing what it listeth, and bringeth, in the end, all truth to nothing."—Hooker's *Eccles. Polity*, B. V. §. 59.

The reader will find, in "A Concise History of the Jews," by the Rev. J. Hewlett, a detailed account of the accomplishment of the Scripture prophecies in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. A work entitled "The Rise and Early Progress of Christianity," by the Rev. J. Hinds, contains much information respecting the Primitive Church, and its main principles of "spirituality, unity, and universality."

The author cannot close these notes without acknowledging the great advantages he has derived from a constant reference to Dean Prideaux's "Connexion of the History of the Old and New Testament." This is, in

point of time, one of the earliest histories in our language, written in a clear, pure English style, with masculine good sense and unaffected piety. The exact accuracy of the information, and of the references to quotations from original writers, will ever be appreciated by students. Fidelity seems not so much an obligation of duty with the author, as an object congenial to his disposition, and pursued for his own personal satisfaction. The dry jejune character of annals is enlivened and enriched by continual dissertations on collateral matters of importance.

The Universal History, edit. 1747, is also a work of very great merit and utility, and very faithful to the original authorities.

THE END.

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